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FUSION

Retro-gaming
Publisher
since 2006



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FUSION

The twelfth of this month will see the inaugural ZZAP Live! event take place at the Holiday Inn in Kenilworth. It's going to be a glorious celebration of everything Commodore, with over fifty machines to sample, from the PET to the A4000. A dedicated Q&A area will also have an incredible list of special guests, including Andrew Braybrook, Steve Turner, Jason Page, Jon Hare, Stoo Cambridge, Jeff Minter, Rob Hubbard, Gary Bracey, Simon Butler, Paul Hughes, and Stephen Thompson. As with last year's CRASH Live event, there will be high-score gaming on the big screen, arcade cabinets to enjoy, and the FUSION gaming area hosting a variety of different consoles, computers, and toys. I'll be there, along with Alan Hammerton and Retro Faith. So, if you see us (lurking) there on the day – come and say hello. We like to talk.

In the meantime, for this month's generation jumping issue, we have reviews of *The Mystery of Woolley Mountain*, Evercade's Team 17 Collection 1 cart', and the new documentary, FPS: The Definitive FPS Documentary. Retro Faith reports from this year's RetCon event, Andrew Oyston looks into Amstrad's failed attempts to make a mark in the 90s PC arena, and Chris O'Regan heads up a new feature profiling indie developer Inkle. We also have a two-part retrospective chronicling Indiana Jones' adventures on 8-bit and 16-bit systems and a host of regular features, including a Badass Boss, a Super Stage, a Musical Marvel, and more. Thank you for continuing to support FUSION, and I hope you enjoy the issue.

MISSION START!



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Ben Honebone

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THE MYSTERY OF WOOLLEY MOUNTAIN

WHAT'S THAT YOU SAY, OLD BEAN? ANOTHER BRITISH-THEMED POINT-AND-CLICK ADVENTURE? AND THIS ONE HAS TIME TRAVEL? HOW SPIFFING, ANDREW OYSTON WILL BE PLEASED!



After a trip down detective memory lane with *Lord Winklebottom Investigates* and the Zucker

brothers' level of gag throwing in *Lucy Dreaming*, *The Mystery of Woolley Mountain* arrives to add a touch of loopiness to what seems to be a simple case of saving some children from an evil witch.

Our adventure begins with Van Damme Laudenklee almost reaching the witch's lair before being captured. It's then up to Garland Vanderbilt and The Crystal Submarine's motley

crew to rescue Van Damme and the children. There's a 60s folk group gag in there somewhere.

You'll notice almost immediately that there is a distinct aesthetic to *Woolley Mountain* and one that will divide the crowd. I think it fits the retro appeal of the game perfectly, and fans of the British cartoons of yesteryear will be very appreciative. Locations are varied and hold more than a few visual gags if you look for them. Also of note is the voice acting. It's top-drawer stuff and again harks back to some of the more esoteric

Below: You can play games on this, and that mag looks familiar...



MEET THE CREW GARLAND VANDERBILT

HEAD CHORISTER
TOP LINE VOCALS
STICKLER FOR TIDINESS

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MEET THE CREW AUTO

ROBOTIC AID AND PROTECTOR
DEVELOPED A FONDNESS
FOR GARLTON
FORGOTTEN WHY HE LOVES HUMANS

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MEET THE CREW CARLTON BREEZY

LOVES MOONSHINE
A CELEBRATED PLAYER OF
THE LOW FREQUENCY GUITAR
VERY LAZY

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animations that the BBC and ITV broadcast back in the day. If one is off-key, it's the voice of HQ, who sounds like an asthmatic Johnny Vegas. Of course, if that was the intention, then "Bravo!" to all concerned.

Although the characters sometimes fall into caricature, I feel a certain affinity to Carlton Breezy, a film buff and beard aficionado who loves proper ale, except I prefer sci-fi instead of Westerns. I'm pretty sure I wouldn't desert my friends in need to go to the pub, but let's not test that theory, especially when The Grey Horse is up the road.

The script neither wastes the cast nor holds back in reminding those of a certain age of the joys of the 80s. You want flying Spectrums? You got it! Remember Jamie and the Magic Torch,



Above: A Chelsea scarf? Really?!

Below: This monkey business is a barrel of laughs!



The Trap Door, and The Adventure Game (I am just old enough for that last one)? They have you covered. In fact, it is both a strength and, sadly, a weakness of the game. If you don't understand the references, it won't ruin your enjoyment of the game. But, being an 80s child makes the game an easter egg hunt *par excellence*.

The music throughout *Woolley Mountain* is also brilliant, and the final tune as the credits play out is a remarkable/terrible (delete as appropriate) example of something that will swim around your brain for days after playing. And play to the end you will, as you get carried through the story to its satisfying conclusion. Sure, it relies upon a familiar time travel trope, but at least it's an excellent example of the type.

It's not all tea and tiffin, though. There is too much traipsing between locations, and with three "acts", it's not the longest of games, which is perhaps why some of the puzzles are a bit... obscure. I had to resort to an online guide at several points, and I'm no stranger to this genre. However, once I knew the solution, it was a case of "Oh! That's what they were thinking!", so it could just be a case of me being a bit stupid.

A couple of bugs also cropped up, but to the





Above: Flying Spectrums? [Seems legit - Ed]



credit of the developers, they are still providing fixes, and a good-sized update landed just as I was starting to write this review. A quick return to the game confirmed that the issues had been fixed. A final comment has to be made about the interface. It's quick and easy to use, but I wish the designers had put the buttons at the top of the screen. During play, navigation and movement became a chore as the inventory and menu buttons were at the screen's bottom corners, right where you'd click to move.

With excellent presentation, an engaging story and some charming voice work, *The Mystery of Woolley Mountain* is a fun way to spend several hours. It has its foibles and doesn't reinvent the genre, but it proves to be a fine example of it and one that you should experience yourself. ■



BADASS BOSSSES

GEORGE STURGEON CLASHES WITH KHALISET FROM ASSASSIN'S CREED: ORIGINS AND TELLS US WHY THIS BATTLE AMID THE SANDSTORMS OF GIZA EARNS HER THE TITLE OF BADASS BOSS.

■ The cause for this confrontation occurs as our Assassin, Bayek, encounters his latest target, known as Khaliset. Having traced her whereabouts to the inside of the Tomb of Khufu in Giza, Bayek readies himself to face this equally efficient opponent.

A skilled tomb raider and huntress, Khaliset is a member of the secretive Order of the Ancients. This operative has been gathering silica from Giza's tombs in an attempt to activate the ancient technology she uncovered within the Tomb of Khufu. Consumed by anger, Khaliset is determined to resurrect her lost Daughter, Eshe, through a combination of bloody sacrificial rituals and the powers within the tomb walls. Khaliset is accompanied by a loyal pack of trained Hyenas that will attack upon her command, but perhaps even more lethal than their jaws is the precise aim she possesses with her bow.

Khaliset earns the title of Badass Boss for



ASSASSIN'S CREED ORIGINS

delivering a duel that deviates from the direct face-to-face confrontations typically seen in video games. Employing an attack strategy that leans heavily towards stealth mechanics, her ability to strike from a distance and vanish from view mere moments later makes for a deadly encounter.

Her striking tribal face paint and dark camouflaged clothing set her apart from her fellow Order of the Ancients operatives and are ideally suited to slipping in and out of the unforgiving desert environment. Where Khaliset may not have comparable size and strength to other *Assassin's Creed* boss encounters, her cunning use of stealth and deadly Hyena companions make this a distinctive boss.

Boss: Khaliset

Location: The Hyena

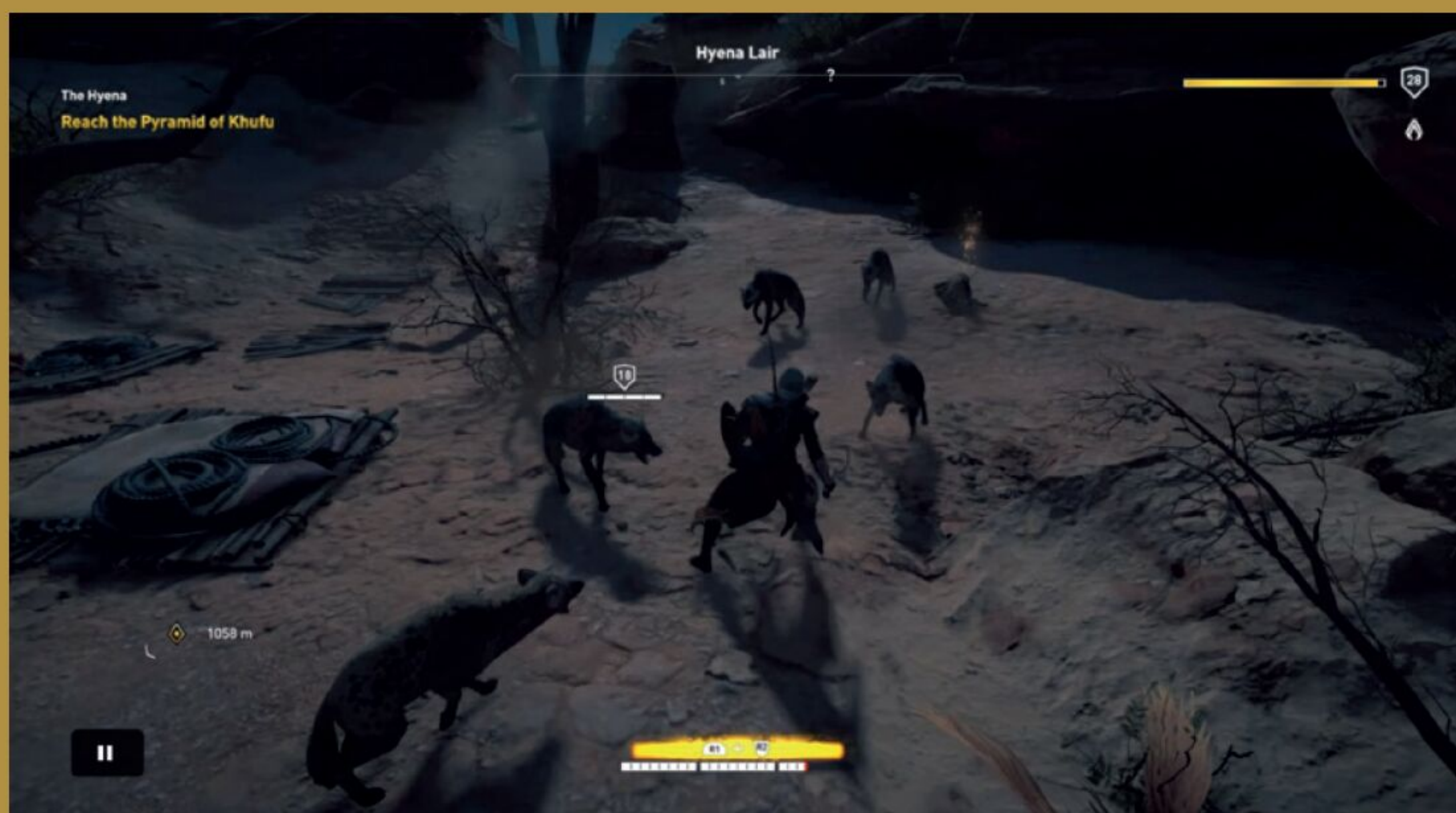
Dev: Ubisoft Montreal

Year: 2017

System: PC, PS4/5, Xbox One/Series



Above: Khaliset launches an arrow at Bayek, whilst her Hyenas lurk.



Above: Bayek is outnumbered by Khaliset's Hyenas.



Below: Bayek manages to fend off one of the Hyenas.





BOSS BATTLE DESIGN

This boss battle is a three-dimensional duel that starts in the passages and corridors of the tomb. While exploring beautifully realised pyramids, the player interrupts a sacrificial ritual orchestrated by Khaliset. Here, the player comes face to face with her power first-hand as she reacts furiously to Bayek's unwelcome presence. She attacks with a bow and arrow before slipping away under the cover of a smoke bomb.

From here on in, the player must avoid her arrows as they track her through the tomb and into a vertical shaft that leads to the surface. This exit offers one last chance to stock up on arrows before climbing up to the ruins for the main confrontation. As we've come to expect from the *Assassin's Creed* franchise, the visuals and attention to detail are impressive and do a great job of engrossing the player in this ancient Egyptian setting.

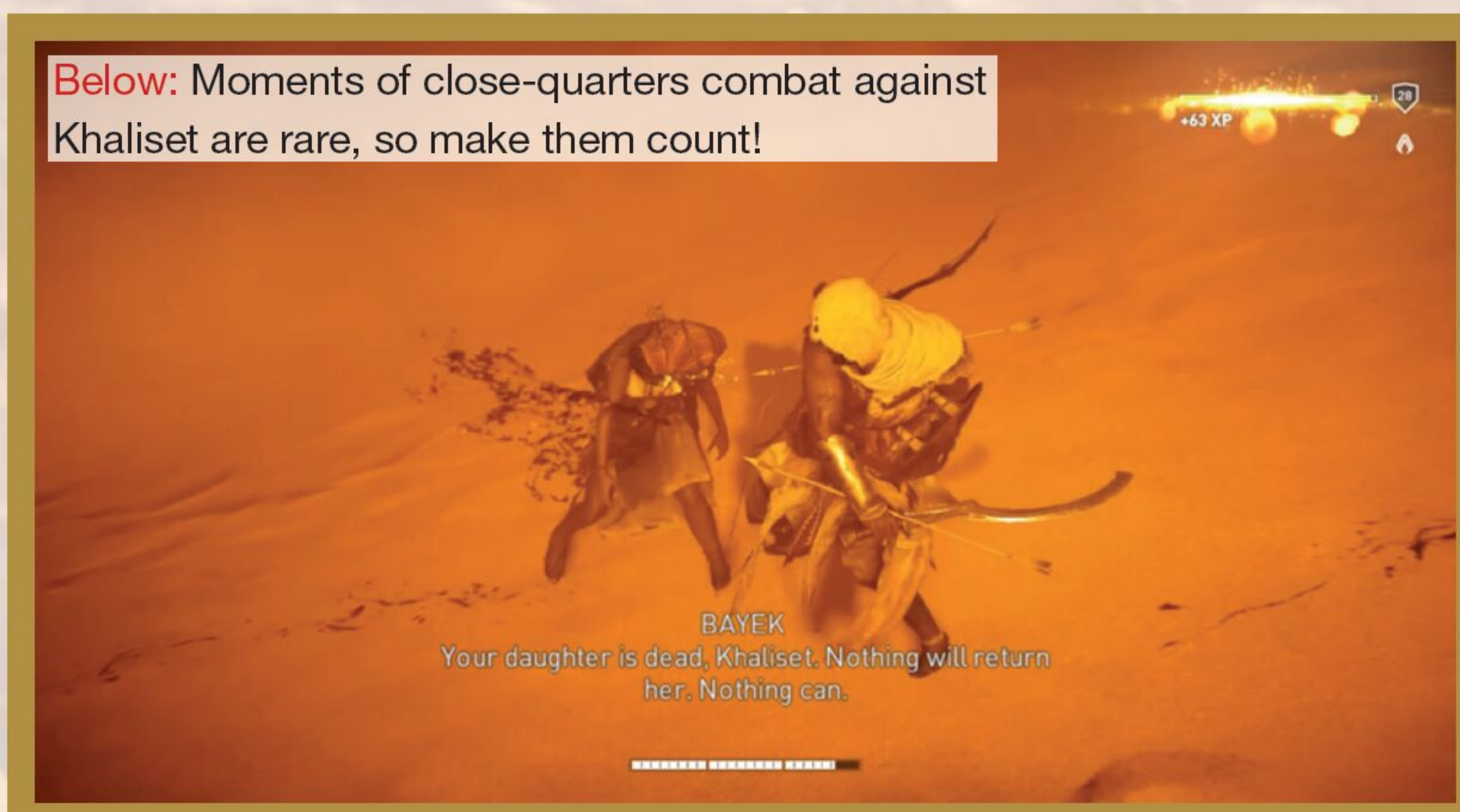
Where many boss battles are direct tests of strength and power, this conflict with Khaliset takes

an unusually indirect approach that hinges on stealth, strategy, and the element of surprise. Utilising Giza's ruins as a battleground and the harsh sandstorm as cover, the uneven terrain and limited field of vision create the perfect conditions for a memorable duel.

It quickly becomes evident that to take out this elusive target, the player will first have to find them. It proves no small feat as Khaliset relentlessly pelts the player with fire arrows from afar, striking from various directions. Her accuracy is deadly because each arrow is alight with flames, inflicting continuous damage should they connect.

On the plus side, the arrow's flames can be used to the player's advantage in pinpointing their opponent's position, which is necessary

Below: Moments of close-quarters combat against Khaliset are rare, so make them count!





to predict and parry incoming arrow fire with a shield. As the player finds themselves trading blows in close-quarter combat with Khaliset, they will need to make the most of this opportunity, as it won't be long before she deploys a smoke bomb and swiftly retreats into the distance and the safety of the sands, readying herself for her next onslaught.

True to her title within the order as 'The Hyena', Khaliset's loyal beasts patrol the lower grounds, so beware when jumping down, or they will inflict severe damage to Bayek. Their lower position serves to keep the player on top of the ruins and in their master's firing range. It's a brilliant set-up on the part of both the boss designers and Khaliset herself, escalating an already tense battle into something even more dramatic.

Overlaying this climactic confrontation is a befitting soundtrack titled 'The Hyena's Fire'.

Tribal drums, stringed instruments and the light tones of a synthesiser combine to give this boss battle an immersive and authentic Arabian aura.

The highlight of this battle is the expansive pyramid ruins, which cater for several different gameplay styles. This battleground leaves the approach entirely up to the player and encourages experimentation. This arena can play host to the traditional assassination-style method of sneaking up with a weapon and slashing at close range. But if that's not your style, long-range archery duels using the ruins as cover can be a safer option. My favourite was charging headfirst over the terrain and straight into danger, vaulting over the stone structures, weaving in and out, and dodging arrows dramatically. While this looks impressive, it doesn't always yield the best result!

Through a skilled display of stealth and deception, Khaliset uses the desert's harsh environment to her advantage, presenting a unique and perfectly executed confrontation worthy of any great hunter. Defeating Khaliset will require the player to think and fight like a true assassin, devising a tactical approach to strike down this hunter of the sand and shadows once and for all. ■

Below: Defeating Khaliset sees her dragged into the afterlife by her Hyenas.



CHRIS O'REGAN DELVES INTO THE HISTORY OF NOTABLE INDIE DEVELOPER INKLE.

Founded by Joseph Humfrey and Jon Ingold, inkle is a much-celebrated developer that creates games anchored around a strong narrative. Stories inspire both Joseph and Jon and their telling via the medium of video games. This love has led them to leave the often-perceived comfort of triple-A development at Sony, so they can explore the potential of video games to convey tales, be they ancient legends or brand-new adventures.



Above: John Ingold.

Title:	Genre	Platform(s):	Released:
Frankenstein	Interactive fiction	iOS	2012
Sorcery! Part 1: The Shamutanti Hills	Graphic adventure	iOS, Android, Windows PC, macOS	2013
Sorcery! Part 2: Kharé: Cityport of Traps	Graphic adventure	iOS, Android, Windows PC, macOS	2013
80 Days	Interactive fiction	iOS, Android, Windows PC, macOS, Nintendo Switch	2014
Sorcery! Part 3: The Seven Serpents	Graphic adventure	iOS, Android, Windows PC, macOS	2015
Sorcery! Part 4: The Crown of Kings	Graphic adventure	iOS, Android, Windows PC, macOS	2016
Heaven's Vault	Action adventure	Windows PC, PS4/5, Nintendo Switch	2019
Pendragon	Tactical adventure	Windows PC, macOS	2020
Overboard!	Visual novel	iOS, Windows PC, macOS, Nintendo Switch	2021
A Highland Song	Adventure	iOS, Windows PC, macOS, Nintendo Switch	TBC



Above: Joseph Humfrey.

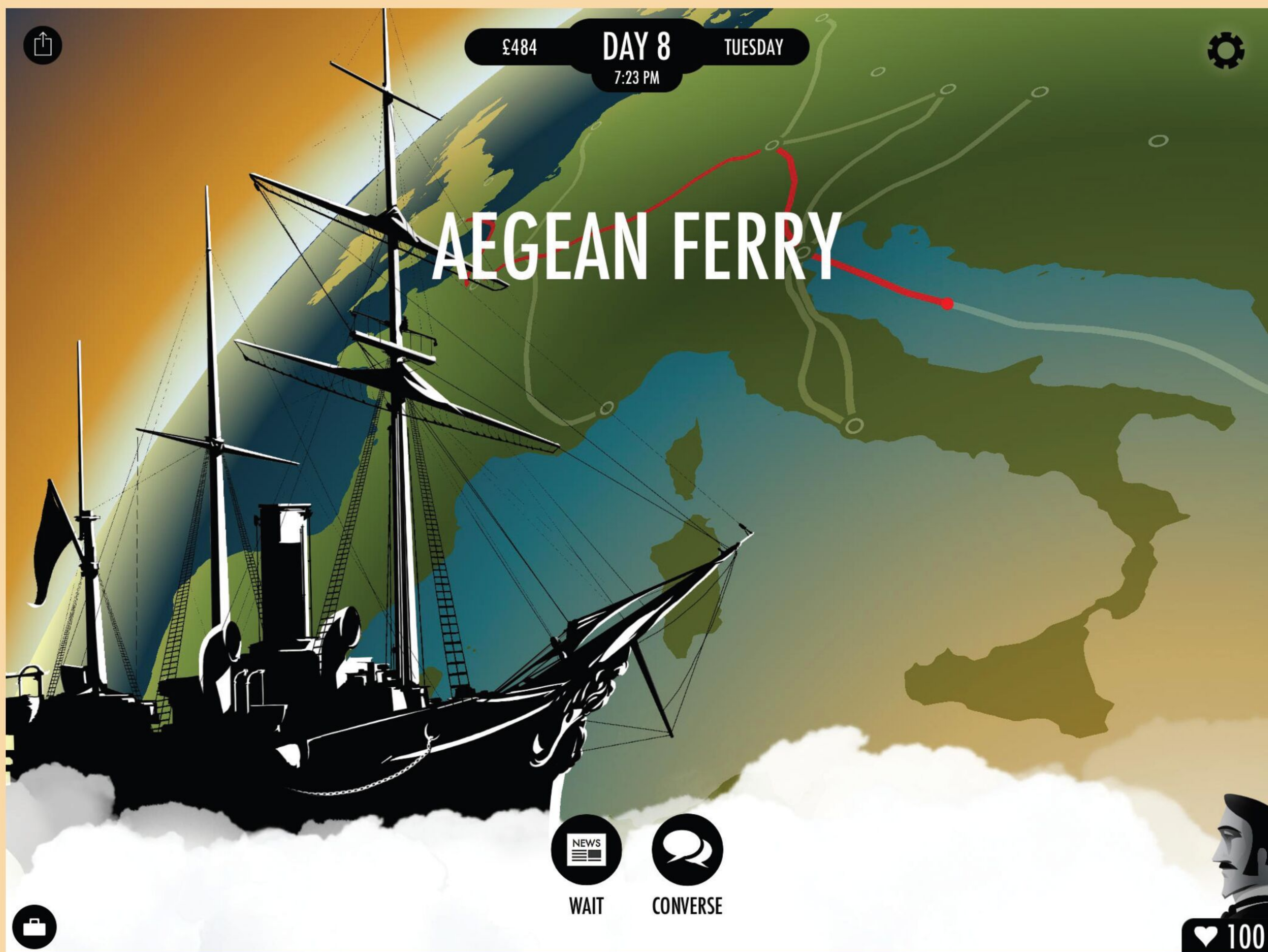
While *80 Days* put inkle on the map in terms of being a developer of note, it was their work on creating a digital version of the much-loved *Sorcery!* adventure books alongside the original author, Steve Jackson, that set them along the path they have followed since. A complex and lengthy adventure, inkle created an intuitive interface that broke down the barrier between the player, reader/game, and story. Played across four parts, the *Sorcery!* series is a testament to inkle's attention to detail and tenacity when developing their games.

Another important release of inkle's is *Heaven's Vault*. An action-adventure title, the game was a departure from their previous interactive fiction games and required a much larger team to create. Set in the far future, the player takes on the role of Aliya Elasta, a xenoarchaeologist who discovers an ancient civilisation with its own language that the player needs to decipher using a basic set of primers.

The drive to create games that can do as good a job as any other medium to tell a story is laudable. However, inkle's purpose is not contained within themselves either, as they have created a middleware tool called Ink that other developers can use to add well-structured tales

Below: *Heavens Vault*.



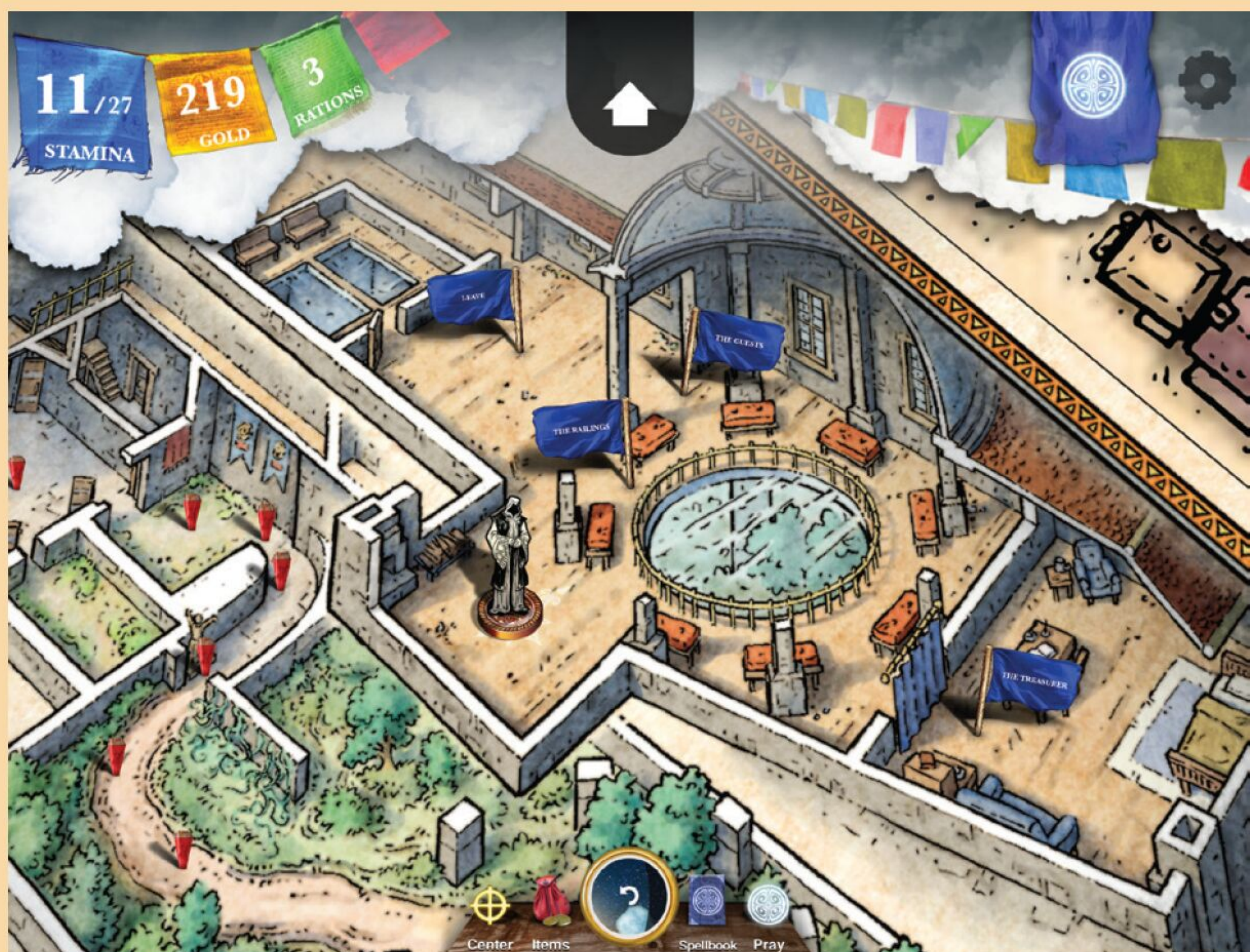


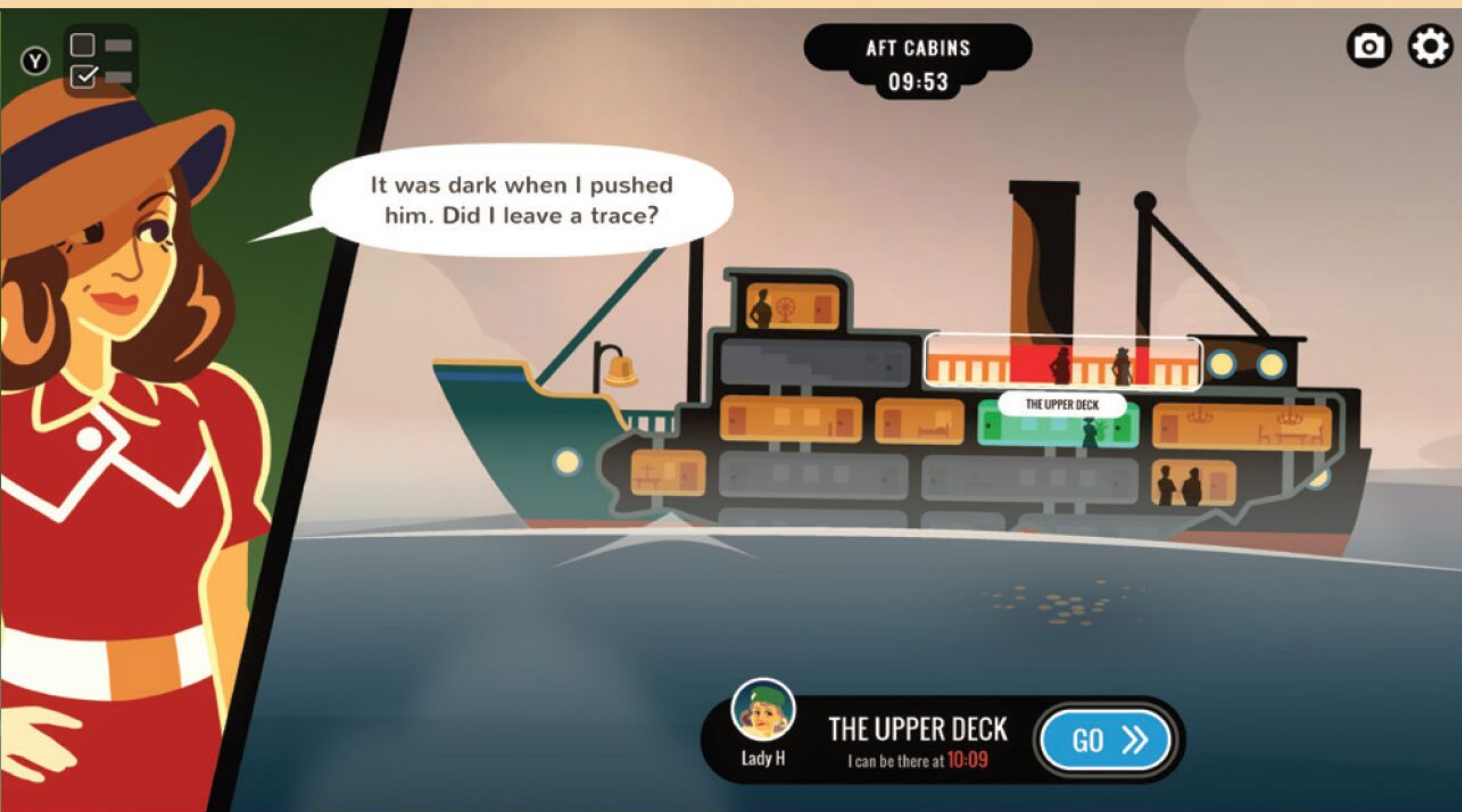
Above: 80 Days.

to their games. Ink has led to a significant improvement in storytelling within the video game community and is something we, as players of these games, should be very grateful for.

But not only are inkle magnanimous in sharing their knowledge and skills with others – they are also prolific creators. Despite having been founded just over ten years ago, inkle has already released nine titles, a rare feat for most developers. That's not to say the quality of its games suffers because of this level of output; it is more a product of the robust set of tools available to them that affords them the ability to create so many entertaining games in such a relatively short period of time. For example, *Overboard!* was developed in 100 days and is one of inkle's most successful games, both commercially and critically.

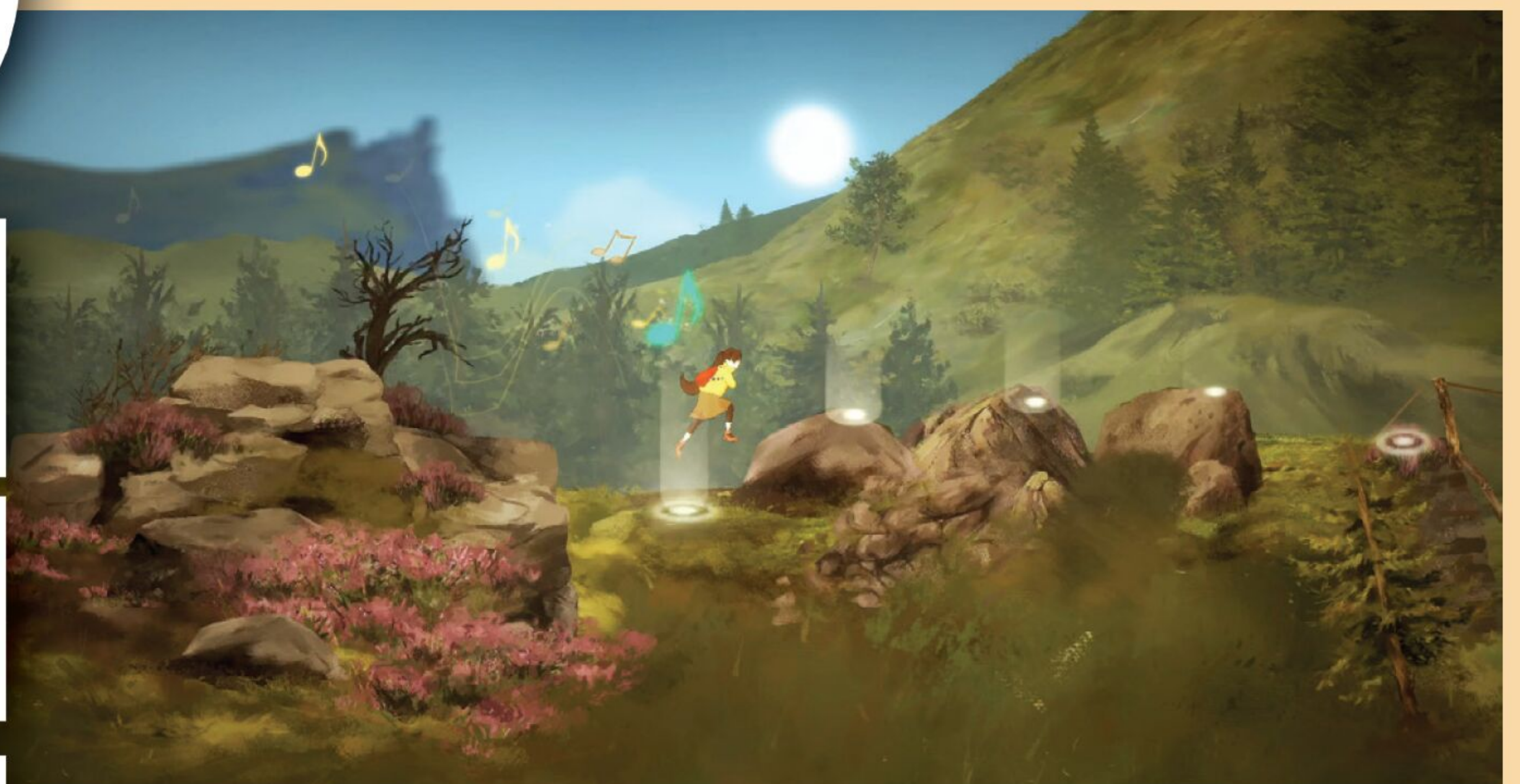
Below: Sorcery!





Above: *Overboard!*.

Inkle continues to develop titles while providing support for Ink. Its latest game is *A Highland Song*, a 2D action-adventure following the trials and tribulations of Moira McKinnon, a young Scottish girl who has never seen the sea and is invited by her uncle, Hamish, to meet him at his lighthouse. A platformer that requires the player to land on specific spots to maintain the rhythm of a song, it's a bit of a departure for inkle. The art style is also quite different from its previous titles, along with the animation, which is very detailed. However, if the quality of inkle's past titles are anything to go by, *A Highland Song* looks to be just as enchanting as its previous efforts. ■



Above: *A Highland Song*.



Above: *Pendragon*.



RetCon

2023

THE RETRO GAMING FESTIVAL



Above: It seems that Iain Lee is back on the BBC!



RETRO FAITH HEADS TO NORTH LONDON TO GET HER RETRO ON AT THIS YEAR'S RETCON HOSTED BY GREENFORD COMPUTER CLUB.

It was my third year at Retcon, and this was the biggest yet with a feeling that this event may be slowly outgrowing its local community hall based in the heart of Greenford. The layout was similar to the previous four years, with the main hall hosting retro consoles, computers and curios that were all available to play throughout the day. There was also a similar feel to the competitions and raffles that helped create a buzz. However, something in the air gave Retcon 2023 a new sense of identity.



The event is well established as a local, community-focused day out filled with retro goodness and a chance to meet some retro celebrities. All those aspects are still here in abundance. The organisers know what they're doing, and the event has everything any retro event needs. What is different now, however, is the sense that it may be outgrowing its space. Retcon is crammed with so many excellent things to do. You can play consoles, listen to guest speakers, compete in tournaments and catch up with friends. It's my favourite event

TALKS



The Oliver Twins - 11:00

· The Oliver Twins create a brand new game today, don't miss your chance to shape it! ·

Kevin Toms - 12:00

· Kevin talks about his past games and Football Star Manager, coming soon ·

RetCon Talk Panel - 13:00

· Join Colin Porch, Retro Faith, Stephen Jones & Steven Fletcher for our first RetCon panel ·

David Pleasance & Trevor Dickinson - 14:30

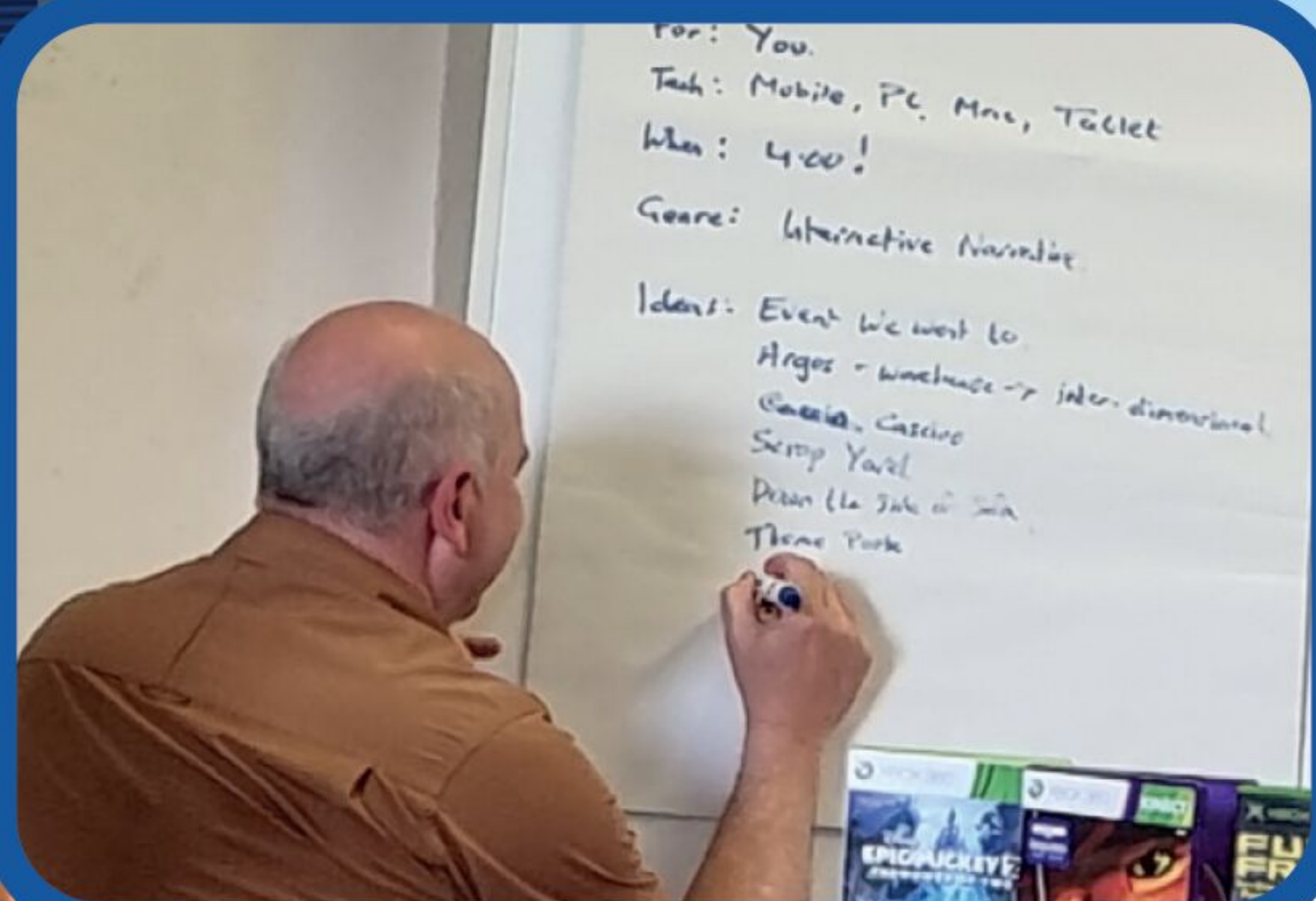
· An update on Vultures to Vampires and more ·

Raffle Draw (Main Hall) - 15:30

· Win amazing prizes! ·

The Oliver Twins - 16:00

· Andrew & Philip present their latest game, created today here at RetCon 2023 ·



Above & Left: The Oliver Twins planned and developed a new game during the event.

using a larger venue. But, there was another noticeable thing that happened during the event.

There were some excellent talks throughout the day. The Oliver Twins discussed how to make a game

because it takes a no-nonsense approach to retro conventions and always has something happening.

The first thing I noticed was that the number of traders and exhibits had been scaled back a little to ensure all the playable consoles had enough space. I didn't mind the lack of stalls as I go to events like this for the games and speakers, but some like to spend time browsing and chatting with those making great retro products. The only answer to this is, of course,

in a day and set about doing just that, coming back at the end of the event to show what they'd created. Kevin Toms, of *Football Manager* fame, spoke about his journey getting his games to market from humble beginnings to professional publishing. David Pleasance chatted with his friend Trevor Dickinson about their time working at Commodore and the new books they've written. I was invited to participate in a wide-ranging panel discussing the state of the industry and where it's heading.



Above: Kevin Toms talks *Football Manager*.



Above: For all its sins, the Panasonic 3DO has one of the best ever *Street Fighter II* ports.



Above: Ocean Software legend Colin Porch (left) talks to attendees.

All these talks were excellent; you could sense the crowd was engaged and wanted to hear the stories. However, the issue was that the talks were popular, and many attendees were crammed at the back or popping their heads around corners to get a glimpse. On the one hand, this was great to see as the speakers and eager fans filled the room. On the other hand, many couldn't get in the room to listen. I'm not positing this as a negative as I rejoice that Retcon has many attendees wanting to get involved with the talks. It's just another aspect that shows Retcon's popularity has grown and, with that, a strain on the community hall where it takes place.

There is a sense that Retcon needs to decide what it wants to be. I love the local feel and focus on community instead of corporate showing off. It has that grassroots feel that makes you feel welcome more than bedazzled.

The organisers have all the time in the world for the attendees, and the atmosphere is one of celebration. If the popularity continues, there is an inevitable sense that a larger venue will need to be found. It may not be a bad thing, though. It would allow for a larger stage for the guest speakers and plenty of room for those listening. It would allow for arcade cabinets to be present to celebrate that part of our gaming history. It would also allow for more vendors, consoles, and exhibits.

Whatever happens, Retcon is an excellent event on the retro calendar, and its success is down to the passionate organisers that put so much effort into hosting a wonderful day. I would be sad to see the Greenford Community Centre enter Retcon retirement, but I also see the benefit of finding a larger space to grow the event further. Long live Retcon, and congratulations to all involved on another successful event. ■



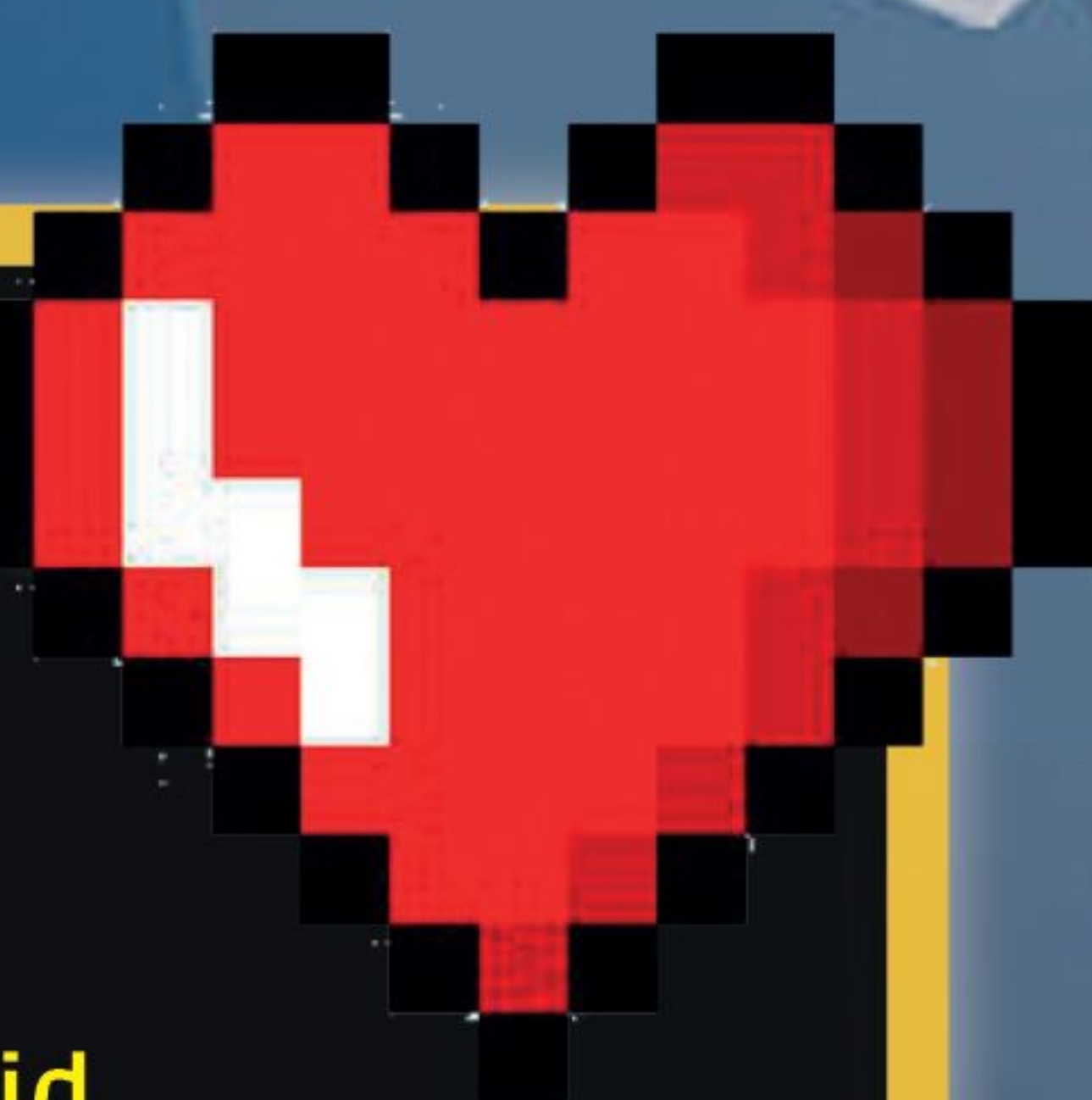
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Game : Iris and the Giant

Year : 2020

System : PS4/5, Switch, Android

Words : Simon Butler

■ Does the world need another rogue-like? In the case of *Iris and the Giant*, the answer is a resounding yes. It's been on my wish list on Steam for ages and somehow got lost in the mix; but suddenly, there it was, so I snapped it up, and I'm lost in its gentle strength and majesty.

Lost in a series of dungeons, each filled with creatures from Greek mythology and all rendered in stunning semi-surrealist simplicity, Iris must fight her way using a variety of weapons toward the exit and her ultimate goal.

The mechanics used here are turn-based cards, displayed at the bottom of the screen. Iris's hand grows and becomes increasingly powerful as the game progresses, but it requires considerable thought and logic to dispose of her opponents swiftly, with maximum damage to them and minimum risk to herself. With strategies to discover and weaknesses to unveil, the journey through what is essentially Iris's identity is always engaging. The graphics, narrative and soundtrack are all equally minimalist, but the path and the resulting rewards you will gain from having played are anything but minimal. ■



INDIANA JONES

and the
8-bit to 16-bit ERA



Below: The dangerous thieves den.



THIS SUMMER SAW THE RETURN OF INDIANA JONES TO THE BIG SCREEN FOR ONE LAST ADVENTURE BEFORE ACTOR HARRISON FORD HANGS UP HIS HAT AND WHIP FOR GOOD. IN TRIBUTE TO THE FAMOUS “MAN IN THE HAT”, COLIN BELL LOOKS BACK AT SOME OF THE 8-BIT & 16-BIT INDY OFFERINGS THAT GRACED OUR CRTs DURING THE 80s AND 90s.

SNAKES. WHY DID IT HAVE TO BE SNAKES?

Our look at 8-bit Indy games begins with *Raiders of the Lost Ark* for the Atari 2600 console. Released in 1982, *Raiders* was the first-ever video game based on an official movie license. Set entirely in Cairo, Egypt, the game tries to focus on the adventure element of the movie. Like the film, it features a marketplace, a thieves’ den, a black market, a temple, and a map room to locate the lost Ark.

The gameplay is similar to Atari’s *Adventure* but is far more linear and lacks the random-level element. Indy can hold more than one object at a time, and inventory management is performed by plugging in a second joystick and selecting your desired object. Collecting objects is critical to locating the map room to reveal the correct mesa where the Ark is buried. The black market is helpful for buying items required to beat the game.

Once you know the location of the Ark, you’ll need a grappling hook and parachute: the first to scale the mesa and the latter to



Above: The busy Marketplace.

make the jump down into the small hole where the Ark awaits. Then you'll need to dodge the thieves and dig up the Ark to claim your prize. You know, just like in the movie.

Despite being a commercial success, the game received mixed reviews. However, it was still early days for our intrepid archaeologist.

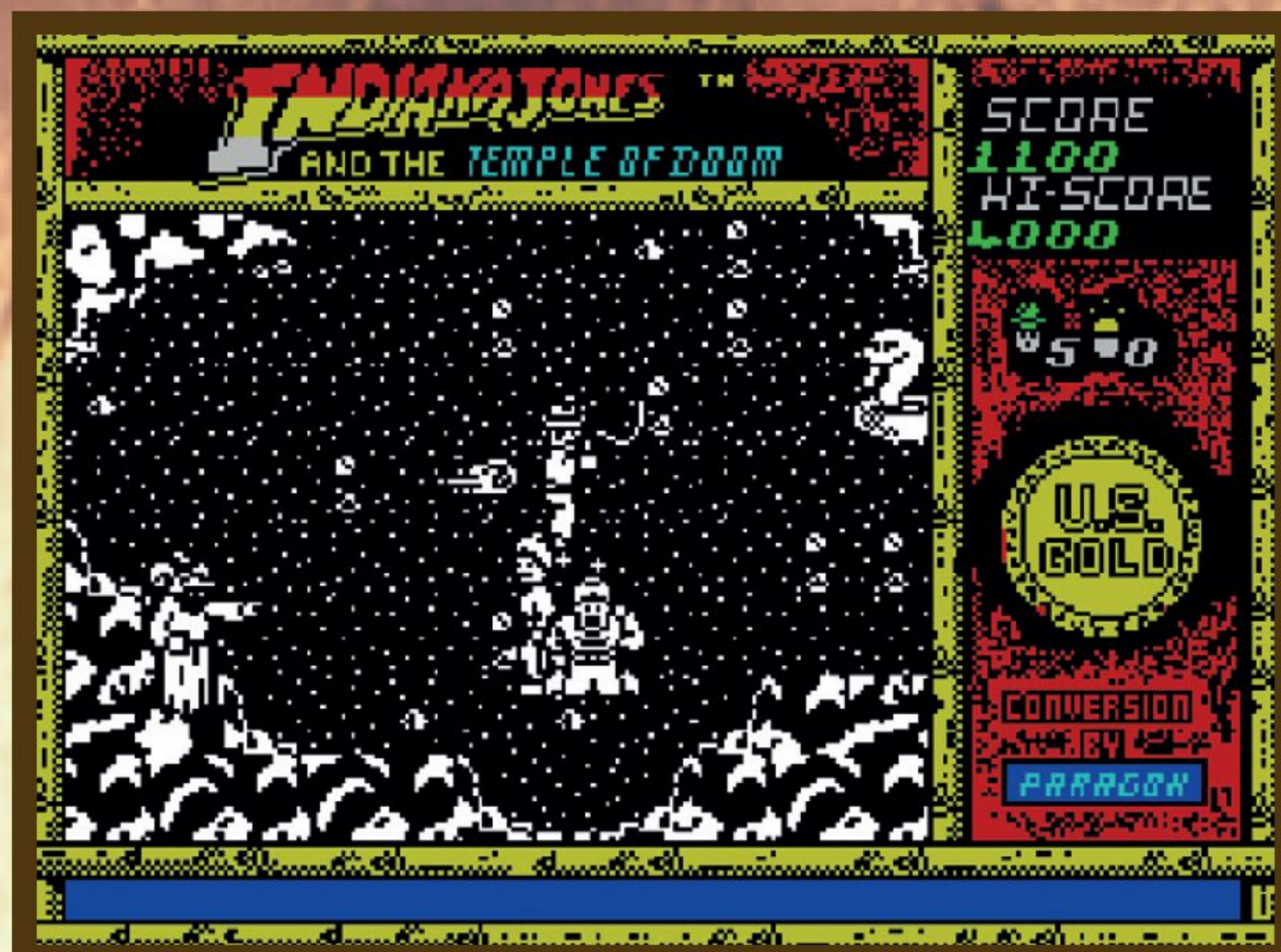
FORTUNE AND GLORY, KID, FORTUNE AND GLORY

Next on our list is *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*. Originally released by Atari in 1985 as an upright arcade cabinet, the game featured tracks from John Williams' musical score and digitised voice clips of Harrison Ford and Amrish Puri, who played the bad guy, Mola Ram.

Played over three stages, you once again assume the role of Indy. First, you must rescue kidnapped children from the Indian village, then make good your escape in a mine cart before finally recovering one of the Sankara stones from the Thugee's sacrificial alter. The game then



Above: The awesome C64 loading screen.



Above: ZX Spectrum (top) and Amstrad CPC gameplay.

loops four times, getting more challenging every time. On the fourth loop, the sacrificial chamber stage is replaced by a final showdown with Mola Ram atop a rope bridge across a river. Defeat Mola Ram, and he'll plunge to his death, allowing you to advance to a bonus stage where you'll get to collect gold statues for extra points.

Two years after its release, *The Temple of Doom* was ported to just about every 8-bit and 16-bit computer of the time, thanks in part to U.S. Gold. Mindscape also played a part and released disk versions for the Commodore 64, Atari ST, and the Commodore Amiga a year later. The Mindscape edition came in a sizeable, well-presented box and featured artwork from the movie on the outside and inside. It's like a collectors edition of the game and well worth getting a hold of if you're a fan.

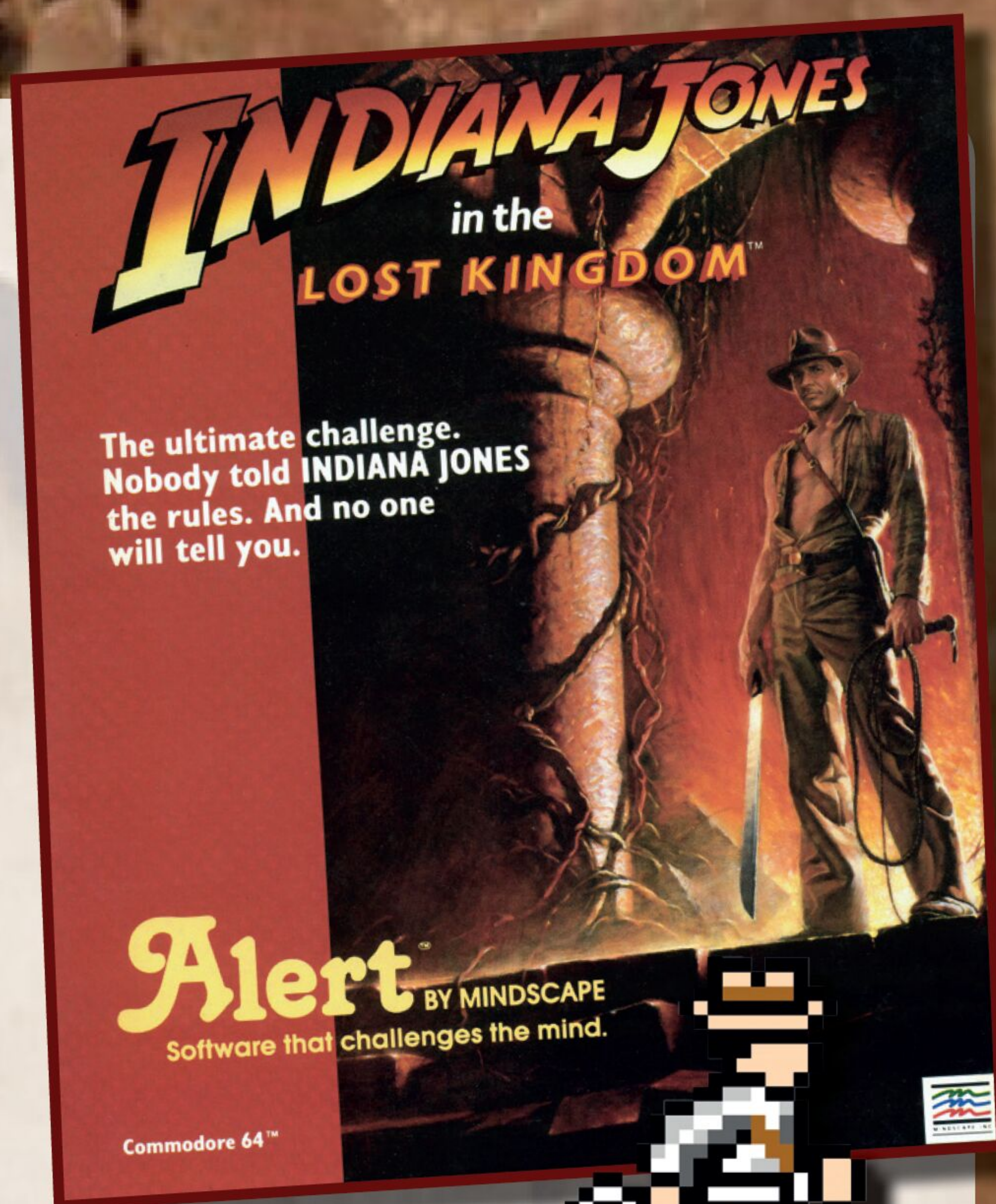


Most versions received favourable reviews praising the gameplay and the accuracy of the arcade conversion. Unlike *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *The Temple of Doom* sticks far closer to the movie's storyline and features some fine whip-cracking action and the ability to use Indy's whip to swing between platforms. It's fun and worth a play, although you should prepare for a frustrating difficulty level.

NEW ADVENTURES

Before we move on to *Last Crusade*, two non-movie-based adventures were released. The first was *Indiana Jones in the Lost Kingdom* by Mindscape, which pre-dates *The Temple of Doom* by one year. The game was only available for the C64 and featured six puzzle-style levels. Interestingly, no gameplay instructions were provided, and it is up to the player to solve the levels through their own intuition and logic. There are, however, clues in the manual that came in the form of hieroglyphs but required a 'magic viewer' to read them. *Lost Kingdom* gathered mixed reviews upon its release, with many complaining of difficult gameplay and poor graphics. Yet many others enjoyed and praised the game for its logical puzzle approach.

The second game with no official movie tie-in is *Indiana Jones in Revenge of the Ancients*. Released in 1987 for MS-DOS and the Apple II, the game came in the form of a text adventure and was again by Mindscape. This time Indy's off to Mexico on a mission for the U.S. Army, who need him to locate the lost Mazatec Power Key before the Nazis do. It features plenty of exploration and locations such as jungles, villages, and ancient pyramids, all the elements required for a great Indy adventure. Even Marion Ravenwood makes a welcome cameo, and there are plenty of other characters to interact with along the way. While less advanced than some text adventures of the time, *Revenge of the Ancients* is an excellent game that I highly recommend.

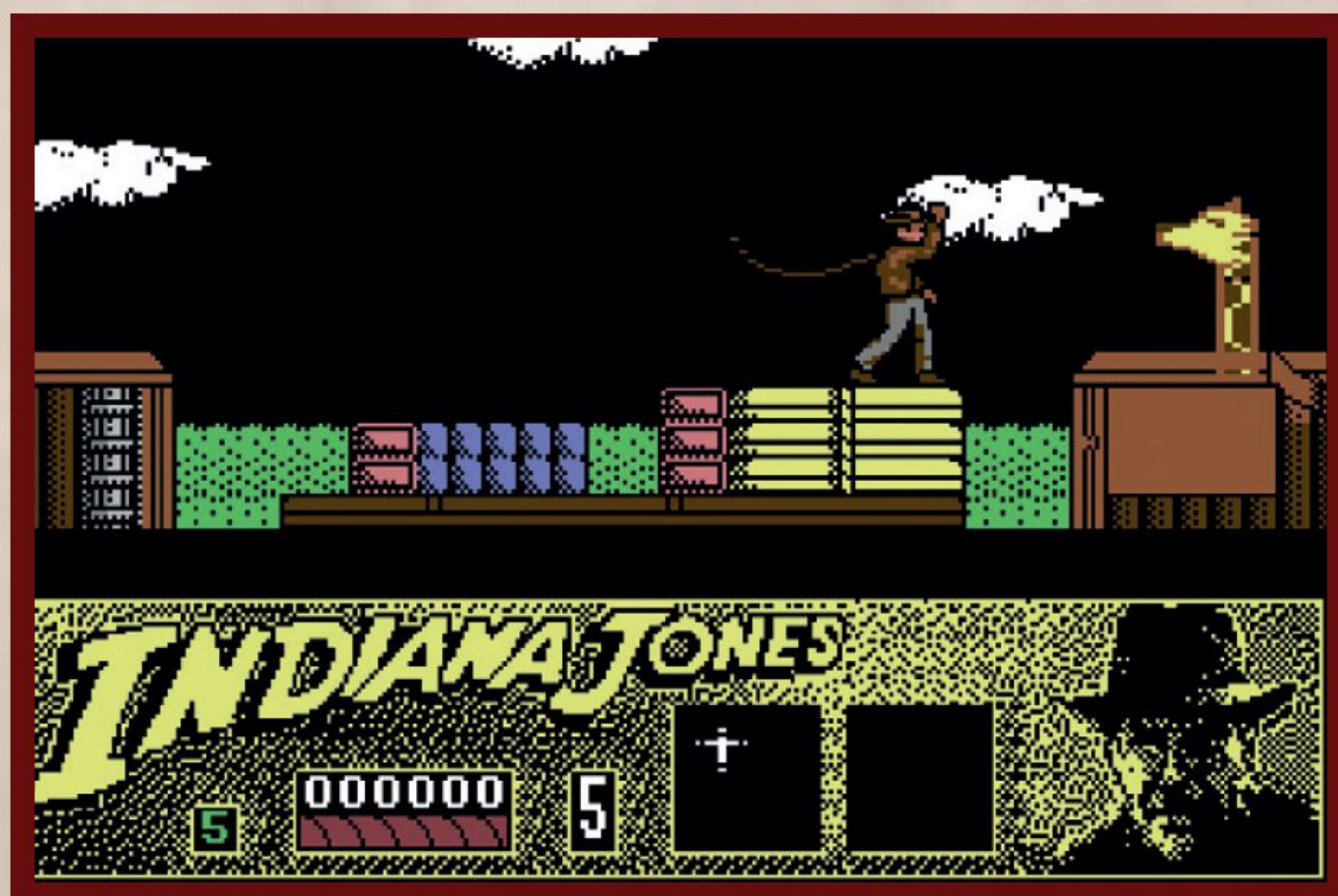
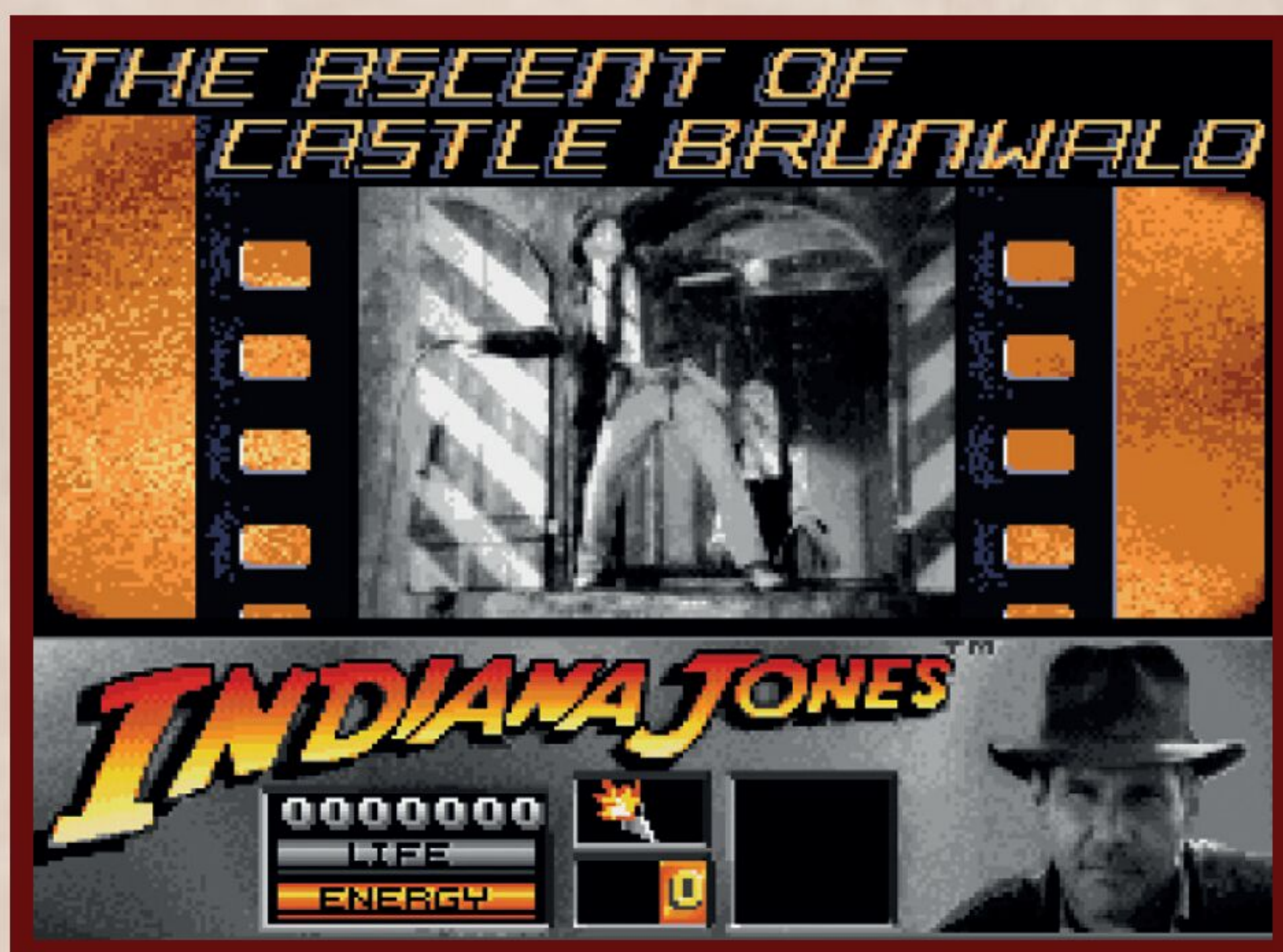
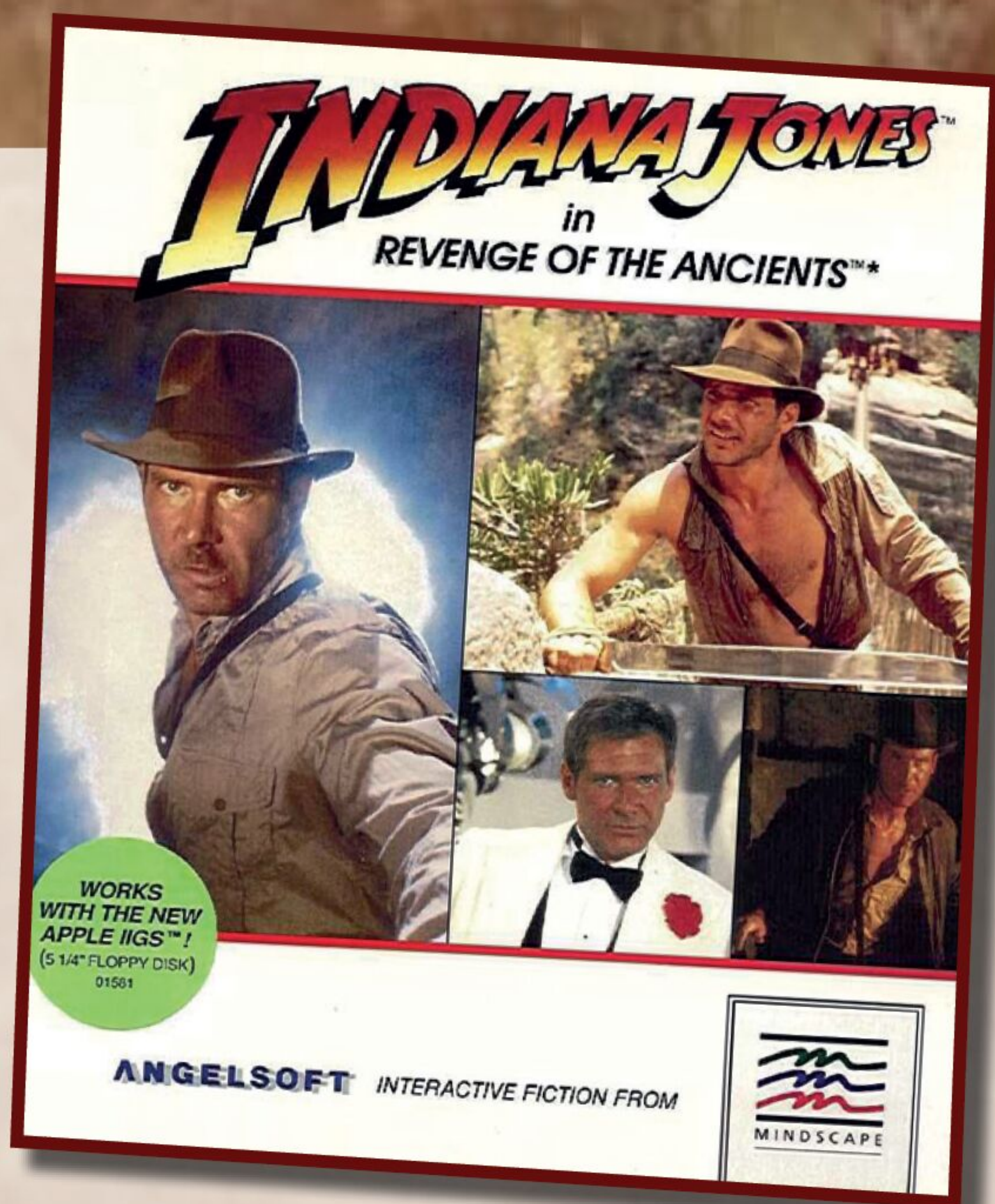


Above: *Lost Kingdom* on the C64.

DON'T CALL ME JUNIOR!

With the 80s drawing to a close, there was just enough time for one final outing featuring our resident archaeologist. Released in 1989, the same year as the movie, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* was an action platformer from Lucasfilm Games, released for every 8-bit and 16-bit computer and console of the day.

On your quest for the Holy Grail, you must jump, punch and whip your way through several levels, collecting items and artefacts as you go.



Above: The colourful Amiga (top) and C64 versions.

The levels follow the movie's locations, with the first set in Colorado. Here you take on the role of young Indiana as he searches for the fabled Cross of Coronado. Once found, you must make good your escape from the caves and across a moving circus train full of animals who attempt to get in your way and knock you from the train. Next, it's off into the catacombs under Venice,

where the now older Indy must find the Knight's Shield. Then, as if by magic, Indy scales the walls of Castle Brunwald in Salzburg, Austria, where his father is being held captive by the Nazis.

The third level is set on the German Zeppelin, which has turned around and is headed back to Germany. You must locate your dad's Grail Diary before escaping from the Zeppelin by descending a ladder onto the attached biplane. Finally, it's off to the Valley of the Crescent Moon and the Grail Temple, where Indy must navigate a series of devious traps and perilous pitfalls to reach the ultimate prize, the Holy Grail itself.

The ZX Spectrum version featured nice graphics, but lacked colours and sound. The Amstrad CPC suffered from a lazy Spectrum port and was also rather poor. In comparison, C64 owners were treated to a visual feast of colours, but the PC, Amiga, and Atari ST versions stole the show with their bold and vibrant graphics and sprites. Despite all this visual wonder, however, the game was a rather dull and outdated platformer that lacked exciting gameplay. The whip was cool for all of two minutes, as was the fading torch light mechanic on the first level, but beyond that, it's just the same thing over four relatively short levels. Don't even get me started on the game's ending, either. Ultimately, Last Crusade was a huge disappointment, especially if you were a fan of the franchise, as I am. I fondly remember this game when I first played it on my best friend's Atari ST. Imagine my disappointment when I got it for my beloved Amstrad CPC - yikes! ■

STAR WARS 12 INCH FIGURES





I've written about Star Wars toys before, but that was generally about the smaller three-quarter-inch figures that most people remember owning and that most collectors seem to collect today. So many kids had these smaller figures because they were sold at affordable pocket money prices and readily available, while many of the bigger sets and toys were out of a lot of children's reach.

The more expensive toys were mainly given as gifts at Christmas and birthdays and, in my household, a rarity. For this reason, I never collected more than a few mini-rigs in my childhood collection. I was no good at saving my pocket money for the ships and playsets, and for Christmas, I often got something Action Man related as my larger present. And I have to say, that was no bad thing.

The large twelve-inch figures released by Kenner passed me by at the time. I don't recall seeing them in the shops or on the pages of the Argos catalogue or seeing any of my friends with them. In fact, the first of these impressive figures I was ever aware of was when my Mum came home one Saturday morning after visiting a jumble sale at the local church with a large Boba Fett in her bag. He was missing most of his accessories, but that didn't matter to me, and he soon became a firm favourite to play with alongside my Action Men.

Kenner made figures from the first Star Wars movie, with more planned to appear from *The Empire Strikes Back*. From Star Wars, we got Darth Vader, Storm Trooper, Luke Skywalker, Han Solo, Obi-Wan Kenobi, Chewbacca, Princess Leia, R2-D2, C-3PO, Jawa, and Boba Fett. Boba Fett was re-issued in *Empire Strikes Back* packaging along with the only new figure, the incredibly hard-to-find IG-88. If the *Empire Strikes Back* toyline line had continued, we would have been treated to Hoth versions of Han, Luke, and Leia, along with a Lando Calrissian figure. Sadly, sales of these impressive



figures didn't do as well as expected, and the line dropped before they got past the concept stage.

These figures are often called twelve-inch figures, but they vary in size. Darth Vader, Chewbacca and Boba Fett all stand fourteen inches tall, which for Vader and Chewie, makes sense. I'm unsure why Boba Fett was made at this scale, as he seems overly large. The rest all fit in the twelve-inch scale, with the Jawa and R2-D2 being smaller to match.

Each came with a few accessories or soft goods clothing and, for the time, looked quite impressive. R2-D2 has a secret compartment hidden in his back that contains the Death Star plans, Chewie's Bandolier holds individual ammo cartridges, and Leia's hair is fashioned into her iconic space buns hairstyle.

ARTICULATION

The figures' articulation also varies, with most being limited to five points of movement or less, similar to the three-quarter-inch figures. You can rotate the arms, head, and legs to pose them in a very basic way, except for the Stormtrooper and Chewbacca, whose heads, like their smaller versions, are fused to their bodies. The human characters are more poseable with the addition of a ratcheted kneed joint. But, for some unknown reason,

they went "all in" with Boba Fett, giving him knees and elbow joints, improved shoulders that rotate in multiple directions, and the extra gimmick of the bionic magnifying eye (taken straight from the Steve Austin The Six Million Dollar Man toy that Kenner also produced). Of all the figures, he is the most advanced. Maybe Kenner knew he would be the most sought-after of the lot?

The simplistic nature of these large figures gives them a real charm, and I have a soft spot for the Chewbacca figure especially. He is a larger version of the three-quarter-inch figure, with a simplistic sculpt, and he isn't



that accurate to the character you see in the movie. But that, for me, is what makes him so lovable.

CUSTOM STORMTROOPERS

As these toys get closer to fifty years old, some of the materials they are made from are starting to degrade, which can cause some issues to arise. The rubber used on the hands of the Stormtroopers and Boba Fett reacts with the plastic used in the arm, and they seem to melt together, so you often see damage in these areas. The plastic used on the Stormtrooper also tends to yellow a lot, and where parts are glued along the seams, you get some attractive brown stains.

It's not an issue for me because I like the age it gives them, and with the addition of some custom hand-made pauldrons, these weathered troopers would look right at home on Tatooine.

REMOTE CONTROL R2-D2

I will also mention the remote-controlled version of R2-D2 that was released because he fits in with these large figures. The remote control version is taller than the twelve-inch version, allowing for the electronics and batteries inside. Using the handheld control, you can make R2's head turn and then drive forwards in that direction, a pretty advanced toy for the era.

As far as collecting them goes, most are not too hard to find in loose, 'played with' condition and can be picked up for pretty reasonable prices today. As with all vintage toys, the accessories are hard to get and can cost a premium. For my collection, I make what I can't find. As you can see from the photos on this page, you can make them very displayable with little effort. ■



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FUSION



FUSION MUSICAL MARVELS

GEORGE STURGEON RETURNS TO A PLAYSTATION CLASSIC AND TELLS US WHY THE TITLE SCREEN THEME FROM *SPYRO THE DRAGON* IS SUCH A NOSTALGIC MASTERPIECE.



Musical Marvel: Title Screen Theme

Game: Spyro The Dragon

System: PlayStation

Composer: Stewart Copeland

Year: 1998

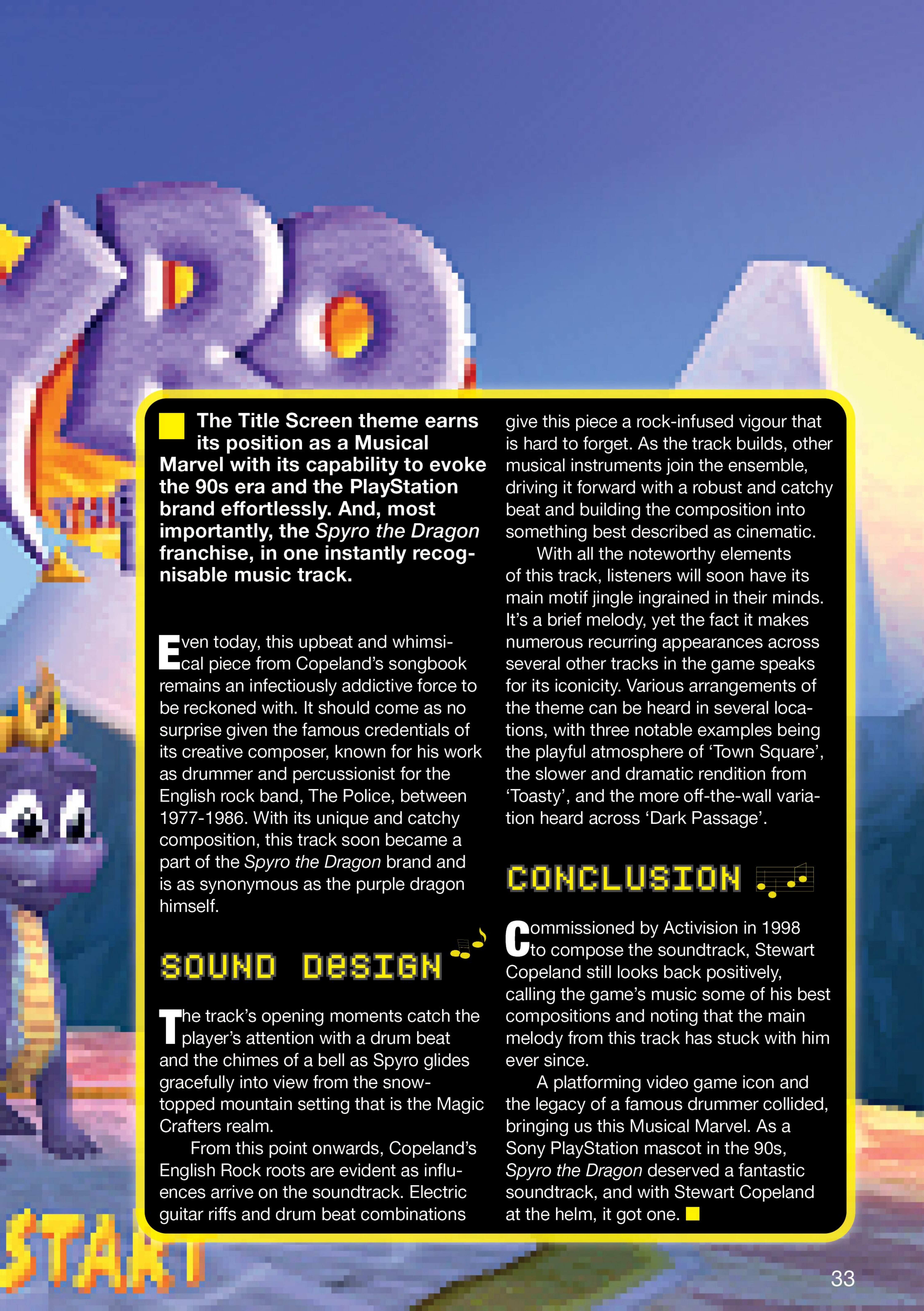
Soundtrack Link:

<https://bit.ly/3pXeO8H>

SCAN ME!



PRESS



■ **The Title Screen theme earns its position as a Musical Marvel with its capability to evoke the 90s era and the PlayStation brand effortlessly. And, most importantly, the *Spyro the Dragon* franchise, in one instantly recognisable music track.**

Even today, this upbeat and whimsical piece from Copeland's songbook remains an infectious addictive force to be reckoned with. It should come as no surprise given the famous credentials of its creative composer, known for his work as drummer and percussionist for the English rock band, The Police, between 1977-1986. With its unique and catchy composition, this track soon became a part of the *Spyro the Dragon* brand and is as synonymous as the purple dragon himself.

SOUND DESIGN

The track's opening moments catch the player's attention with a drum beat and the chimes of a bell as Spyro glides gracefully into view from the snow-topped mountain setting that is the Magic Crafters realm.

From this point onwards, Copeland's English Rock roots are evident as influences arrive on the soundtrack. Electric guitar riffs and drum beat combinations

give this piece a rock-infused vigour that is hard to forget. As the track builds, other musical instruments join the ensemble, driving it forward with a robust and catchy beat and building the composition into something best described as cinematic.

With all the noteworthy elements of this track, listeners will soon have its main motif jingle ingrained in their minds. It's a brief melody, yet the fact it makes numerous recurring appearances across several other tracks in the game speaks for its iconicity. Various arrangements of the theme can be heard in several locations, with three notable examples being the playful atmosphere of 'Town Square', the slower and dramatic rendition from 'Toasty', and the more off-the-wall variation heard across 'Dark Passage'.

CONCLUSION

Commissioned by Activision in 1998 to compose the soundtrack, Stewart Copeland still looks back positively, calling the game's music some of his best compositions and noting that the main melody from this track has stuck with him ever since.

A platforming video game icon and the legacy of a famous drummer collided, bringing us this Musical Marvel. As a Sony PlayStation mascot in the 90s, *Spyro the Dragon* deserved a fantastic soundtrack, and with Stewart Copeland at the helm, it got one. ■

RYAN COLEMAN GETS SWEEPED AWAY BY THE FLOOD IN THIS MONTH'S SUPER STAGE.

■ You're Master Chief, an augmented cyborg Super Soldier, engineered for war. You've been battling the Covenant, a religious collective of alien races, for two decades, trying desperately to halt their progress in their holy war against humanity. After crash landing on an ancient ringworld constructed by a long-dead civilisation, you battle the Covenant through icy canyons and green valleys until you're tasked with locating a squad of marines investigating an ancient weapons cache buried beneath a swampy jungle.

3⁴³ Guilty Spark is an eerie level from the onset. Thick fog cloaks the environment, making navigation tricky. You're alone for the first time during the game, with your AI companion Cortana having been left behind in the previous level. The few enemy Covenant you encounter seem scattered and terrified, and it's not long before you find some of their dead comrades littering the desolate and claustrophobic hallways of the bunker beneath the swamps. In one room, a marine, seemingly



SUPER STAGES

HALO

COMBAT EVOLVED

Super Stage: 343 Guilty Spark
Game: Halo: Combat Evolved
System: Xbox
Developer: Bungie
Year: 2001



Above: Something isn't right in the swamp. **Left:** Master Chief recovers a deceased marine's helmet and learns of his grisly fate. **Bottom Left:** The Flood in formidable combat form.

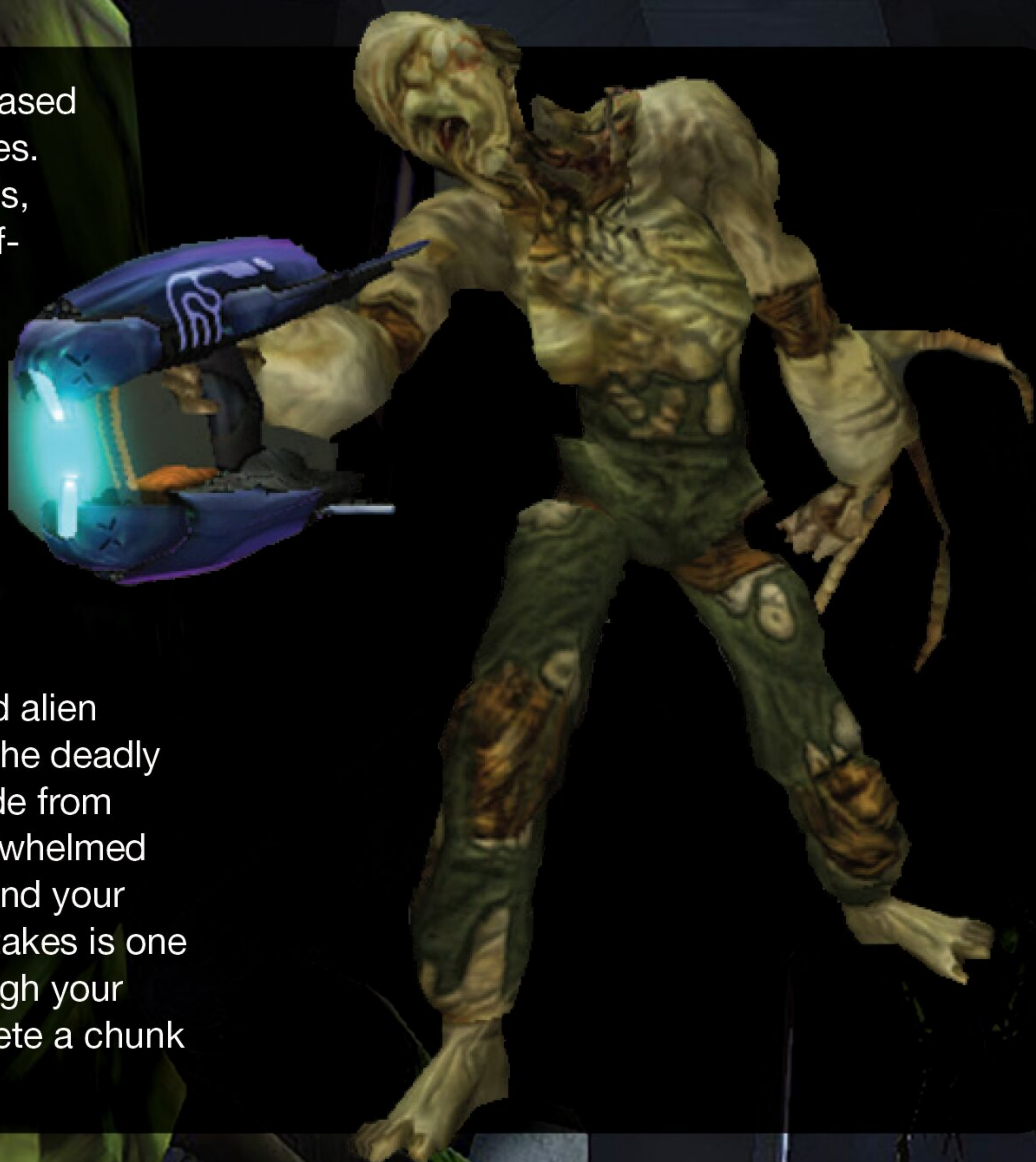


stricken with madness, fires his pistol at you while screaming, "Stay back! You're not turning me into one of those things!"

Finally, you'll find the helmet of another unfortunate marine. The playback from an optical lens reveals the horrible fate of his squad - attacked and infected by the newly released Flood, an ancient parasitic species that burrows into a host's chest cavity, taking control of the nervous system and mutating the host body. Suddenly, waves of the spider-like infection form pour into the chamber and are quickly dispatched before facing off against Flood combat forms - the reanimated corpses of both UNSC Marines and Covenant elites, which look utterly grotesque and rotten,

with the broken necks of the deceased wobbling about as the Flood moves.

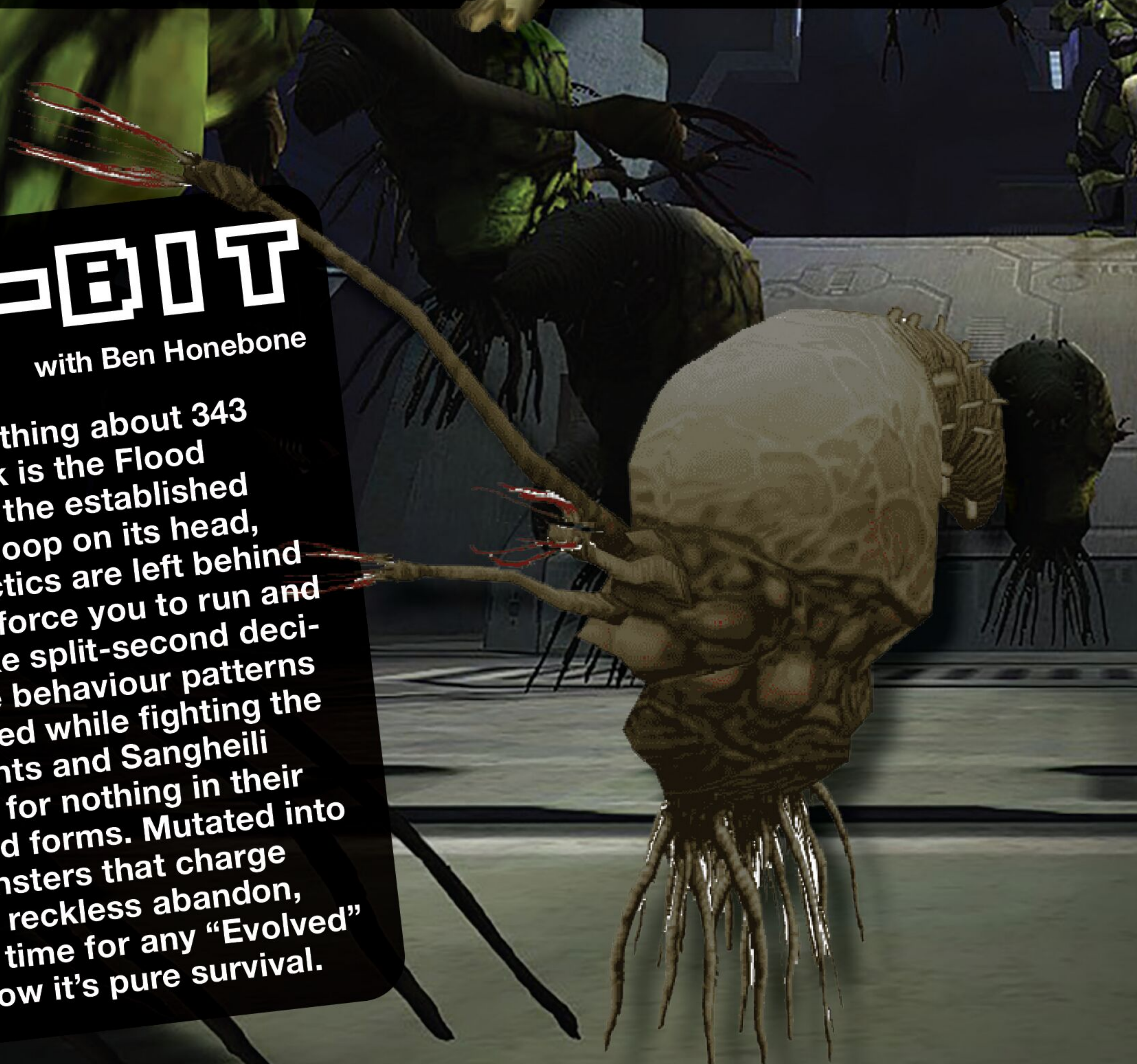
After playing through five levels, players are well versed with the different races in the Covenant and the best way to defeat them, and then the game throws a curveball at the player in the form of this new deadly enemy. Unlike the Covenant, there aren't any organised military tactics with the Flood. They'll swarm at you with combat forms firing at you with human and alien weapons, or slashing at you with the deadly whip-like appendages that protrude from their left arm. Should you get overwhelmed by the onslaught of this undead, and your energy shields get depleted, all it takes is one small infection form to chew through your armour and kill you or swiftly deplete a chunk of health.



GRAB-BIT

with Ben Honebone

The greatest thing about 343 Guilty Spark is the Flood itself. Turning the established Halo combat loop on its head, measured tactics are left behind as the Flood force you to run and gun and make split-second decisions. All the behaviour patterns you've learned while fighting the Unggoy grunts and Sangheili elites count for nothing in their new infected forms. Mutated into savage monsters that charge at you with reckless abandon, there is no time for any "Evolved" combat. Now it's pure survival.





Above: They're out of control and they're everywhere! **Left:** When the Flood get this close to you in their Combat Form, it's going to hurt.

LEVEL DESIGN

The magic of this stage is that it makes you feel like less of a battle-hardened super soldier and gives you a sense of vulnerability, bordering on survival horror. While the player might have gotten used to using Covenant Plasma weaponry which will decimate Covenant energy shields, new players will find Plasma weapons much less effective when tackling Flood Combat Forms. The best means of killing the undead foes are shots to the chest with human weaponry to kill the infection nesting within. Sometimes you'll succeed in putting an enemy down, only for it to suddenly stand up and lunge at you! Learning new battle

tactics and facing the apparent toughness of this new enemy keeps you on your toes and adds something new to the gameplay formula.

While some have criticised this level for its often confusing layout and lack of a clear goal, I see it as part of the ambience. It's supposed to be claustrophobic and confusing, adding to the tension and suspense. In 2011, Halo: Combat Evolved was remastered with new lighting, textures, and models overlayed over the older game. Some changes were welcome, but for me, this level suffered, with enhanced lighting removing a lot of the tension that was present in the original Xbox version.

As cool as it is to be a badass space marine, sometimes it's equally fun to scrabble around in the dark whilst being swarmed with space zombies! For this reason, playing through 343 Guilty Spark will always be one of the most memorable moments of the Halo series, and why it's earned its place as a Super Stage. ■

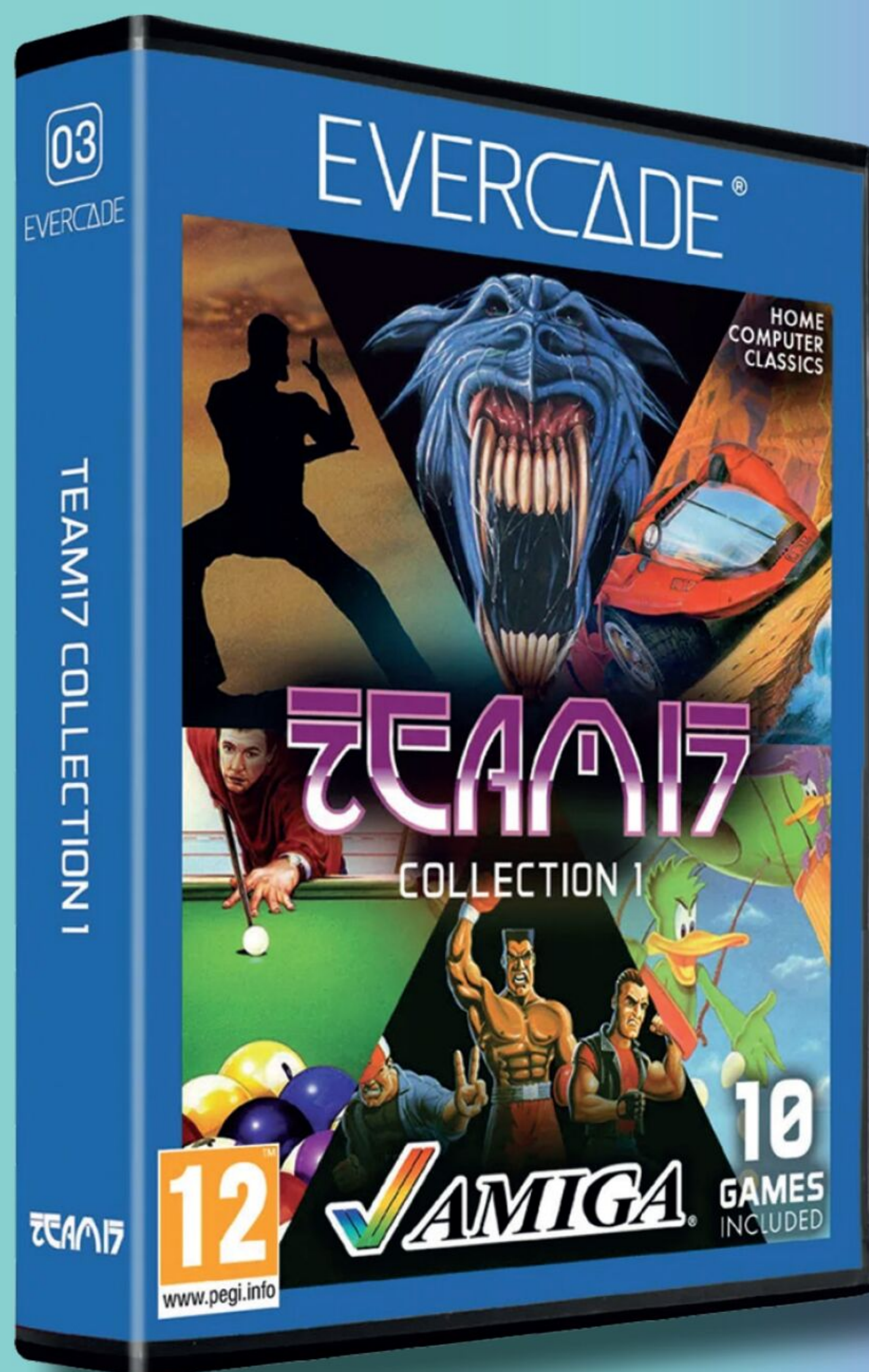
PAUL TWIST LEAVES THE C64 BEHIND AND POINTS HIS EVERCADE VS TIME MACHINE AT ITS SUCCESSOR, THE AMIGA. INSERTING THE TEAM 17 COLLECTION 1 CARTRIDGE, WILL HE REDISCOVER COMMODORE'S BELOVED 16-BIT MACHINE?

■ This collection brings back warm memories of boxes filled with “backups” of games on 3.5” floppy disks. Blaze Entertainment has legally collected ten such games for their Evercade consoles. Evercade owners of a certain vintage have been hoping for a cartridge compiling Amiga games for some time, and now it's finally here. So, do Team 17's Amiga games live up to the fond but distant memories many of us have? The answer to that question is a definitive “sort of”.

First off, fans of the *Alien Breed* series are well catered for, with almost a third of the included games coming from that particular franchise of top-down maze shooters. All of these feature baddies who are definitely just generic aliens and in no way similar to those movies with “Aliens”. The first game appears in its 1992 *Alien Breed: Special Edition* variant, and it remains a playable game that creates a taut sense of claustrophobia and menace, making it scarily good fun to play. The sequel, the accurately titled *Alien Breed II: The Horror Continues*, is perhaps a little less

enjoyable. The more open playing field eliminates some of the claustrophobic terror from the first game. Luckily, the third game, *Alien Breed: Tower Assault*, recreates the tense atmosphere of the first game and scatters about plenty of bloodied dead bodies for good measure. It's the scariest and best of the series.

Fighting fans certainly aren't going to be knocked out by the games on offer here. *Full Contact* is a simplistic martial arts fighter that won't hold your attention for long. The notorious



Above: Don't be fooled, the aliens will attack you! (*ABIITHC*).



Above: *Full Contact* or simply Dull Combat? You decide.



Above: Qwolourful qwartoon platform qwapers in Qwak.

Body Blows is a game that, in my memory, was unfairly maligned. But, playing it again reveals that the oppobrium it received was well-deserved, and my memories of enjoying it must have been through a heavily rose-tinted filter. While *Body Blows* is a nice-looking game, the fighters feel weightless and weedy, and it's far too simplistic compared to other one-on-one fighters of the era. But at least it's better than the risible Amiga port of *Street Fighter II*. Thankfully, that one seems unlikely to resurface and trouble the Evercade.

If you like your cutesy platform games (and I certainly do), then *Qwak* is the game for you. It's a charming and immensely playable collect 'em-up, only marred by the common Amiga curse of requiring you to push up to jump. Speaking of platform games, one notable omission from this collection is Team 17's Sonic-inspired game, *Superfrog*. It's referenced on advertising hoardings in *ATR: All-Terain Racing* (which we'll get to in a moment), but it's sadly absent from this collection. I would've liked to have revisited the little green fella's high-speed platforming antics, so that's a shame.

Hey, sports fans! I'm afraid you're rather badly served by this collection too. *Arcade Pool* is competent



Above: Unfortunately, *Kingpin Bowling* won't bowl you over.

but dull, as is *Kingpin: Arcade Sports Series Bowling*. What drives me "spare" about the latter is that it's such a good-looking game, and there's clearly a great game in there somewhere trying to "strike" its way through [ba-dum-tish - Ed]. Alas, overly fiddly controls hold it back. *ATR: All-Terain Racing* is far from the best game of its type, and it's let down by awkward controls as well. *Skid-marks* showed how well the Amiga could handle an isometric off-road racer, but that wasn't a Team 17 title, so it isn't included here.

Shmup fans may be underserved in terms of quantity, but the quality of the sole shooter on this collection makes up for that. *Project X: Special Edition* is a superior side-scrolling shooter that proves the Amiga could handle arcade-style games, despite *Body Blows* presenting damning evidence to the contrary.

As one of the most prolific publishers of Amiga games, Team 17 was a canny choice for Evercade's first Amiga collection. Some of the games included are mediocre, but with bone fide Amiga classics such as the *Alien Breed* series, *Qwak*, and *Project X*, this collection provides a satisfying snapshot of Amiga games that are just as much fun to play now as they were back then.

The second volume of Amiga games for Evercade, featuring Delphine games, is due in September. We look forward to seeing who the next Amiga software house to get the Evercade treatment will be. We hope they choose "Sensibly" (hint, hint). ■







GRAEME MASON TAKES SOME JOY AND LOOKS BACK AT THE DYSTOPIAN *WE HAPPY FEW*.

■ While its first-person perspective might dilute the effect, there's a robust Orwellian theme to *We Happy Few*. Essentially an action-adventure game with tinges of survival horror, the player is one of three characters: an office-based censor called Arthur Hastings; a female scientist, Sally

Boyle; or ex-soldier Ollie Starkey. Each has their own background and motivations but they're united by one common theme: awakening the population of Wellington Wells from its drug-induced state and escaping its violent police force.

We *Happy Few* is set in an alternate historical timeline of 1960, stemming from the successful assassination of US President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933. The critical result of this is Britain fighting the Nazis on its own, ultimately resulting in the German invasion of mainland England. Left to its own devices following an occurrence known as a "Very Bad Thing", the town of Wellington Wells achieves great scientific feats, most notably the hallucinogenic drug Joy, which delivers chemically-induced happiness to all its citizens.

While much of its gameplay will be very familiar to anybody who's played a first-person shooter before, *We Happy Few's* plot, layered with its alternate war-torn states and bizarre characters, is an intriguing mix that just about carries the game, along with its nasty, violent edge. Boasting some excellent voice acting and a creepy vibe that often blends comedy with cruelty, *We Happy Few* is a novel experience for those willing to look past its mundane combat and copious gloomy interludes. ■



FPS

FIRST PERSON SHOOTER

THE DEFINITIVE FPS DOCUMENTARY

WORDS BY RETRO FAITH

■ I was lucky enough to be given early access to the much anticipated new documentary from CreatorVC entitled **First Person Shooter – The Definitive FPS Documentary**. By the time you read this review, it will be up for pre-order on the CreatorVC website. Just as a heads up, the version of the documentary I viewed wasn't the finished product, and the producers plan a final sound mix, legal review, and some general polishing. That said, it felt like a complete product, so these extra tweaks can only mean it will be even better on release.

So, with all the housekeeping out of the way, I'll start chewing my bubblegum, pick up my boomstick and get blasting through this frag-fest of a documentary. For starters, if you're a hardcore fan of FPS, stop reading and order this documentary right now. It packs more punch than a full-charge BFG and features interviews with only the biggest names in FPS history. You won't

need me to tell you how important the likes of John Romero are to not just FPS games but the history of gaming in general. The entire documentary is told through interviews with industry legends, prominent journalists, content creators and pro gamers, which means there is no narrator, and it's better for it.

As you press play and settle in for four and a half hours of storytelling, you're greeted with a cool opening intro showcasing many of the games featured. The editing is slick, and you know you're in for something special as you point at the screen saying, "That's *DOOM*! That's *Goldeneye*!" It's quite an exciting way to open the documentary, and it then descends into a quiet lull that builds suspense. Now, I need to be careful as the last thing I want is to spoil everything in the documentary, but it does begin way back at the start of gaming, with an overlook of the first FPS games that were developed. For example, it may surprise you that in 1973, some clever high school students produced a vector graphic FPS.

This level of detail, in telling the entire story of FPS, sets the tone. The producers could've given a brief overview and jumped straight to *Wolfenstein 3D*, the game modern



John Romero



Adrian Carmack



John Carmack



FPS games evolved from, and nobody would have batted a shotgun. But, the build-up to the golden era of FPS titles is documented carefully and gives you an excellent understanding of where these games came from. This initial half-hour sets up an incredibly detailed, engaging story told through the eyes of those who lived it.

From there, a magical journey through the history of FPS games ensues, full of nostalgic memories and information that educates. Hearing stories from the likes of John Romero, John Carmack, Tom Hall, Scott Miller, and many others feels like a rail gun ride that logically plots and highlights the essential aspects of FPS history. The standout moments (no spoilers) are the stories on *DOOM*, *Quake*, *Duke Nukem*, *Goldeneye*, *Half-Life* and *Halo*.

What made me start leaning into my

screen and feel intrigued were the explanations of the cultural and societal impacts the FPS was having outside of gaming. The producers could've played it safe and stuck with telling the development stories through the eyes of the folks who made them. But an extra layer of detail makes you think about just how important this genre is. There are also interesting discussions about how important FPS games are to moving gaming technology forward and how fans can get involved through the mod scene. This wide lens of information and ideas helps this documentary stand out as essential viewing to anyone interested in gaming history.

Another aspect I noticed while watching was the excellent editing and balance between sections about technical development and lighter entertainment-style sections.



Above (clockwise from top left): Dave Lebling, David A Smith, Karl Hilton, and Jamie Griesemer.

It keeps the variety of interviewees and games covered reloading quickly to keep the viewer engaged. Given the documentary's length, this is critical as even the most hardened fan may find the technical overload a bit tiresome if it continues for long periods.

Ultimately, the running time is my main criticism, albeit a harsh one. This is a long documentary, over four and a half hours. Casual fans may find it overwhelming to view in one sitting. However, hardcore fans of the genre will love the intricate detail the stories go into. I felt the id Software piece could have been a little shorter. Then again, the story of id is so important to the genre that I can forgive the amount of screen time given to John Romero. He is always compelling and interesting to listen to.

My only other criticism would be the limited space given to military shooters. The likes of *Medal of Honour*, *Call of Duty* and *Battlefield* are wrapped up in a quick fifteen minutes toward the documentary's end. I also felt the editing gave the impression these

games weren't crucial and were looked down upon as derivative products of large AAA companies. I won't argue against these games becoming stale, but I wanted more stories about the development of *Medal of Honour's* beach landing level, at the very least.

I'm nitpicking, though. Everything about FPS - The Definitive FPS Documentary is high quality. It's a fast-paced, pipebomb-laden gore fest that travels from the beginning of one of gaming's most important genres and into its future. Even the most casual of FPS fans will enjoy hearing from so many industry legends, and anyone with a taste for gaming history needs to watch this.

It was a blast from start to finish and took me from the depths of hell to the outer reaches of space as it fired away story after story - a must-watch. ■

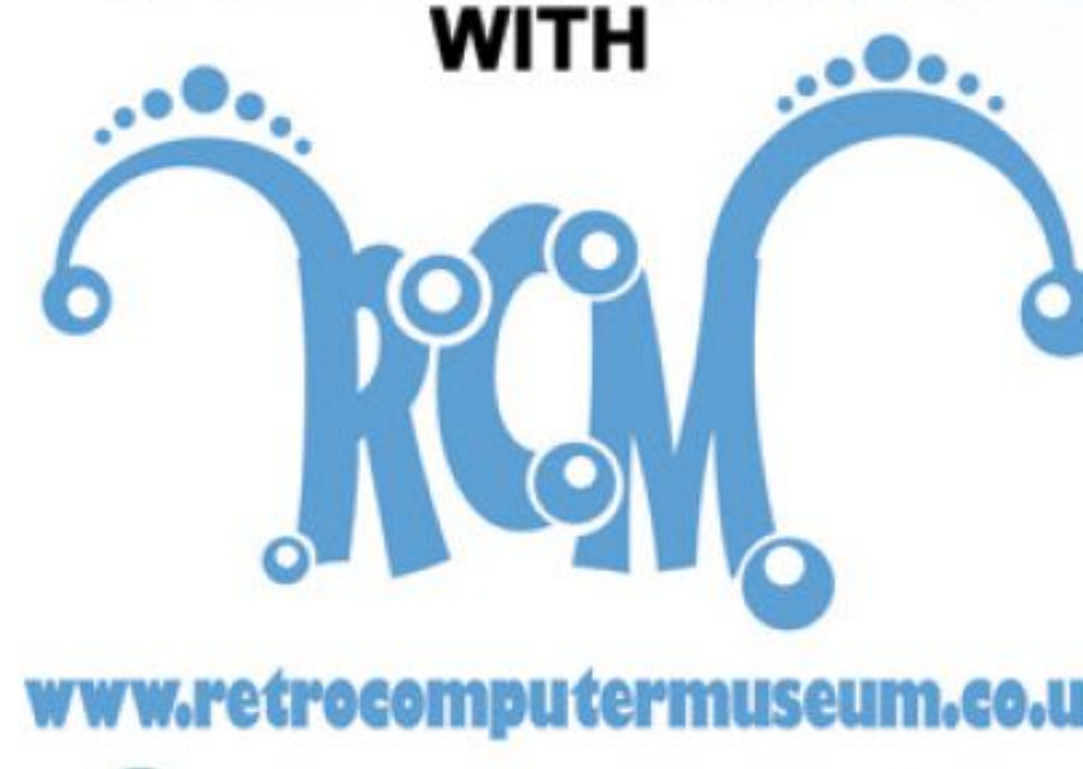


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Heaven!

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be a

BANG_ER!



MORE DETAILS COMING SOON

AMSTRAD

GAMING PCs

ANDREW OYSTON CHARTS AMSTRAD'S ATTEMPTS TO STAY RELEVANT IN THE EARLY 90s PC MARKET.

■ The early 1990s saw Amstrad's computer business go into a bit of a tizz. The Plus range of 8-bit machines had flopped hard, the Spectrum had expired from old age, and their DOS PCs suffered from the fallout of the 2000-series hard disk woes a few years prior. Against this backdrop, the big box 3000-series (covering 086, 286, and 386 models) and a compact desktop aimed at executives, the 4386, were launched. The compact 5000-series followed in short order and, with it, an attempt at the family PC market in late 1991.

The 5286 Family Pack was advertised widely upon release, with full-page colour adverts highlighting the machine's serious and playtime possibilities. Packing a 16MHz 286 with 1MB of RAM and a 40MB hard disk, it also had VGA graphics, enough for 256 colours in supported DOS titles, but could only offer



THE FIRST PC TO BREAK THE SOUND BARRIER.

We gave the Amstrad PC5286 all the best features you need for serious business use and great games entertainment.

Then we gave it features which were unheard of.

As you'd expect, it has state-of-the-art graphics with a 14" high quality VGA monitor which will display up to 256 colours from a palette of over a quarter of a million.

Terrific for business applications but all that colour is wasted on games if your sound system comes from the dark ages.

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Available from selected branches of Alders, Dixons, John Lewis, Rumbelows, Ryman's, Wildings and over 3,000 registered Amstrad computer dealers.

16 colours at the highest resolution. Expansion options were limited (two half-length 16-bit ISA slots and no spare drive bays) but included were an Ad-Lib sound card, a joystick, speakers, and three pack in games: *F-15 Strike Eagle II*, *Links*, and *Prince of Persia*. On paper, a decent selection, all for £899, exclusive of VAT.

Hold on! VAT not included? Well, no, and while that was pretty standard back then, this package was aimed at the home user, so the inclusive price came to £1056. Yikes!

Now you may be thinking, compared to an Amiga 500, that's a serious amount of dosh, and you'd be right. However, if you wanted a similarly kitted out Amiga for Christmas 1991, an A500 Cartoon Classics Pack cost £399, a Philips 8833 Mk2 monitor was £270, and a 40MB hard drive could be had for around £300 - a total of £969. The 5286 didn't look all that bad in comparison, especially when resellers would sell you one for under a grand.

However, it got murkier when the Family Pack was compared to its PC compatriots. 1991 was the year the 386 processor became mainstream, and glancing at the multitude of box builders at the time shows you could source a basic 386SX for around the same price. OK, you didn't get any games included, and the set-up wasn't as user-friendly, but the big-case 386 was faster, more expandable and reasonably future-proofed.

It didn't take long for Amstrad to realise the error of their ways (and accept the fast-moving nature of the PC market). By the spring of 1992, the Family Pack adverts quoted a price of £799 inclusive of VAT, a £250 cut for the high street consumer. Resellers went even further. RSC, for example, was selling them for £656 inclusive, which was better, especially compared to the Amiga,

but didn't help the machine's lack of power or expandability.

Other Amstrad PC ranges also benefitted from game bundles as resellers tried to shift stock. The 4386, launched in May 1991 at £1699 ex VAT, had dropped to £659 by the end of 1992. Sure, it was dated, but you still got a 4MB 20MHz 386SX and a...10-inch monitor? A super sharp one, to be fair, using a Sony Trinitron tube, but having experienced one very briefly in real life, it was far too small for daily use. Once again, the trio of games was *Links*, *F-15 II* and *Prince of Persia*. Funny that.

As 1992 came to an end, the 7000-series of machines arrived, and with it, another Family Pack, and yes, it was the 286 model again. At least that was more sensibly priced than the original, coming in at as little as £599 ex VAT, bundling between three and six games depending on the reseller. But the 4386 was only £60 extra and could play some of the more recent releases. Having four times the memory and double the hard drive space sweetened the deal. If you were an Amstrad fan, it was an easy call. If you weren't, then there were much better offers out there.

Resellers also added games packs to other Amstrad desktops: Time Computers had the 7386 (386SX at 25MHz with a 40MB hard drive for £698 ex and 80MB for



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LANDMARK 2.00 PERFORMANCE COMPARISON CHART

Model	20	25	31	47	51	66	54	67	84	92
Amstrad 486	20	25	31	47	51	66	54	67	84	92

Silica Systems are pleased to present an upgraded version of the Mega PC, called the Mega Plus. This has been upgraded with the revolutionary silicon 486 CPU, manufactured by Texas Instruments and jointly developed with Cyrix. This chip is a multi-chip set comprising a 486 core processor with a 50ns internal data path, 16 internal cache and power management features. Power meter aggregate MPB performance is increased by up to 2 times and it boasts an overall performance of 92MHz using Landmark's latest version Speedom 2.00 benchmark. This is almost 3 times as fast as a 386sx - 25 CPU (see Landmark Speed Chart above). The Mega Plus 486SLC 33MHz PC comes in two versions - 40MB hard drive with 256 RAM at £799 and 130MB hard drive with 4MB RAM at £899.

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£798 ex). Adding eight games may have swayed some potential purchasers, as might have Time's 6486 bundle (20MHz 486SX, 4MB RAM, 105MB HD) that not only included a ton of productivity software but also gave you the option of three games, sound card and joystick (can you guess which ones? Yep, the same three that had rocked up with the 5286), for a total of £1058 ex VAT. The bundling of a handful of ageing games with some clearance stock was not the way forward; besides, Amstrad had other plans.

In the January 1993 issue of Mean Machines, Sega announced the Mega PC, a computing/gaming hybrid that "kind of" arrived. For £999, you could revel in the delights of a 25MHz 386SX with VGA graphics, 1MB of RAM, and a 40MB hard drive, combined with Mega Drive functionality. You also got a joystick, a control pad and MS-DOS 5.0. It shipped with neither PC games (maybe they'd finally run out of that F15-led triple pack) nor any Mega Drive titles. It might have been user-friendly, but it could have done with some entertainment enticement.

In comparison, a Mega Drive with Sonic was around £130 inc at the time, so commentators rightly questioned the value of the PC side of the deal. Although you didn't need a separate

TV (saving the family a fight over the TV when Eastenders came on, as one Amstrad spokesperson put it), the clearance prices noted above were still valid, and the going rate for a generic box-builder of the same spec as the Mega-PC was around £600 to £700. Even considering VAT, Amstrad's machine wasn't the best value. For example, then-popular PC manufacturer Carrera would sell you a 486 with four times the RAM, twice the hard drive space and full SVGA graphics (and associated monitor) for not much over a grand inclusive.

Of course, price cuts wait for no one, and by the middle of 1993, the Mega PC was down to £599 ex VAT. The Mega Plus was soon rolled out, ramping up the power with a 33MHz 486SLC and double the VRAM. Two configurations were advertised: a 2MB RAM/40MB hard drive base edition for £799 ex and a 4MB/130MB option for £899 ex. If supplied by Silica Systems, you got Windows 3.1, Wing Commander: Special Edition, Life and Death II: The Brain, and Mavis

Beacon Typing. That last one, gentle reader, was definitely not a game [Italics removed - Ed]. Not that these “improvements” helped matters, as the 486SLC was a low-budget processor and hampered by its 386 origins, paling in comparison to “proper” 486 chips from Intel.

As 1993 waned, once again, it was the resellers ditching stock that led to the cheapest Mega PC deals. Time Computers spammed Observer and Guardian readers in October with one bundle that included office and leisure titles for £449 ex VAT, whilst another added educational software for £499 ex VAT. The Mega PC was never a massive seller, and the Mega Plus even less so.

Amstrad continued selling PCs into the mid-90s, switching from its traditional high street channels to the “direct to customer” model pioneered by Dell years before. However, pretty much every other PC manufacturer, large and small, was already doing this. Dozens of companies like Opus Technology, Viglen (who would later end up being bought by Amstrad), and the aforementioned Carrera vied for sales in an intensely competitive market.

The 9000-series resulted in a selection of 486 and Pentium desktop models, with some aiming for the multi-media market with added CD-ROM drives, sound cards, and the like. A 486 DX2-66 could be had, including copies of *Descent*, *Theme Park*, *Little Big Adventure*, and *Links-Pro*, for just over a grand inclusive in mid-1995, but this was simply following the growing market for home entertainment PCs. A contemporary round-up of DX2-66s found Amstrad’s offering rated against 21 other machines, all with similar specs and price points. Instead of leading the pack, Amstrad was now just part of it. After failing to find interest in its PC-TV hybrid Integra range, Amstrad had left the

home computer market for good by the end of the following year.

Lacking its predecessors’ impact on the home PC market during the late Eighties, Amstrad’s 5286 was an attempt, if a bit half-hearted, at the PC-aspiring family of the early 90s and at maintaining its brand with high street computer retailers. Resellers just wanted to shift stock, and Amstrad tried in vain to keep up with the Joneses, although by then, there were many more Joneses than Alan probably realised. The one model that could be described as a games machine was a reasonably designed tech fusion, but who was it aimed at? Kids wanted a Mega Drive, adults didn’t want the family computer tied up with games, and serious PC gamers decried the spec.

Delivering too little, too late, and having perceived poor value sabotaged Amstrad’s attempts to remain relevant in a growing, intensely competitive PC market that would see the once brand leader in DOS machines in the UK give up the ghost. ■

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FUSION



Game : Mega Man X
Year : 1993
System : SNES
Words : Retro Faith

■ I was ten years old when I first played *Mega Man X*. Something about the bold, bright pixels shining out at me and the Capcom colour barrage got me. I hadn't played much of *Mega Man* on the NES beyond the odd quick go at kid parties. So, *Mega Man X* on the SNES was my first full "Blue Bomber" experience, and I loved every moment. It's one of my favourite games and one I revisit every few years to remind myself why it's one of the most incredible action platformers ever developed.

I still remember that slight tingle down my spine when I saw the first boss flash into view with the dramatic music. It felt like you knew your mission and how tough it would be. And *Mega Man X* is tough, especially if you want to complete the game with all the extra weapons and power-ups. Luckily, the password save system means you don't have to do everything in one sitting. The challenge is worth it to witness a beautiful 16-bit classic play out. It's a unique game that gets better as it continues.

The level design is up there with the very best, and the boss battles are memorable, each requiring a different weapon to render them truly vulnerable. Then there are the secret weapons and pick-ups, such as the Ryu-style fireball and dragon punch. Those wanting the ultimate challenge will try to complete it using the standard buster weapon, a feat I've achieved a couple of times with much practice and perseverance. You must also find all the heart pieces to max out your health bar in preparation for the final stages. It all adds up to a compelling gameplay experience that remains in the memory long after it's over. ■

INDIANA JONES

and the Point & Click ERA...

**COLIN BELL CONTINUES
HIS INDIANA JONES 16-BIT
RETROSPECTIVE WITH A LOOK
AT THE CELEBRATED LUCASFILM
ADVENTURE GAMES.**

YOU HAVE CHOSEN...WISELY

The quite brilliant *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure* was released in 1989. Published by Lucasfilm Games and developed using the SCUMM engine, at the time, it was one of the most complex point-and-click adventures around. It featured several locations from the movie, fighting and arcade sequences, several ways to solve and complete the game, and a flexible points system called IQ points or 'Indy Quotient' points. There were 800 points in total that you could earn, but this was by no means an easy feat as it involved finding alternative solutions to certain puzzles and could be affected by avoiding enemies instead of fighting them.

Fighting was tough, really tough, and to do so, you had to use your numeric keypad, which took a bit of getting used to. You could try and talk or bribe your way out of a fight but say the wrong thing, and it was time to put up your dukes. Defeating one enemy was fine; the problem was that your health did not replenish afterwards, and opportunities to refill it were few and far between.

The game follows and expands

upon the movie's plot and starts with Indy arriving at the college where he teaches. He arrives dripping wet and making squelching sounds as he enters the foyer - a humorous nod to the opening events of the movie. The game is packed with humour, as one might expect from a Lucasfilm game, and it is a very welcome addition. It's not long before Indy meets businessman and main antagonist Walter Donovan, who tells him of the Nazis' quest for the Holy Grail and his father's disappearance. This turn of events leads us to Venice, where we meet Elsa Schneider, a fellow archaeologist who tells Indy that his father was last seen in the local library, where this portion of the adventure begins. You must find your way into the catacombs below the streets of Venice and find the tomb of one of the Holy Grail knights whose shield is said to hold key information about the final resting place of the Grail. This section of the game is particularly good, and it's worth checking out the books in the library (trust me).

The next part of the adventure leads Indy





Above: "Fly - yes! Land - no!" That car looks useful...

to Castle Brunwald to rescue his father, and this is where the difficulty ramps up somewhat, no thanks to the many guards that patrol the corridors. The higher you go in the castle, the tougher it gets, so you need to be on the lookout for some disguises and have the correct responses to get by some of the guards. Otherwise, it's time to fight!

Once reunited with your father, it's time to escape the castle and head for the airport, where you can get on the Zeppelin or skip it by flying the biplane (if you have an item from earlier on in the game). Fighting through the Zeppelin section can be challenging due to the number of guards but make it to the biplane, and you'll be treated to an arcade-style sequence where you'll have to shoot down incoming German fighter planes.

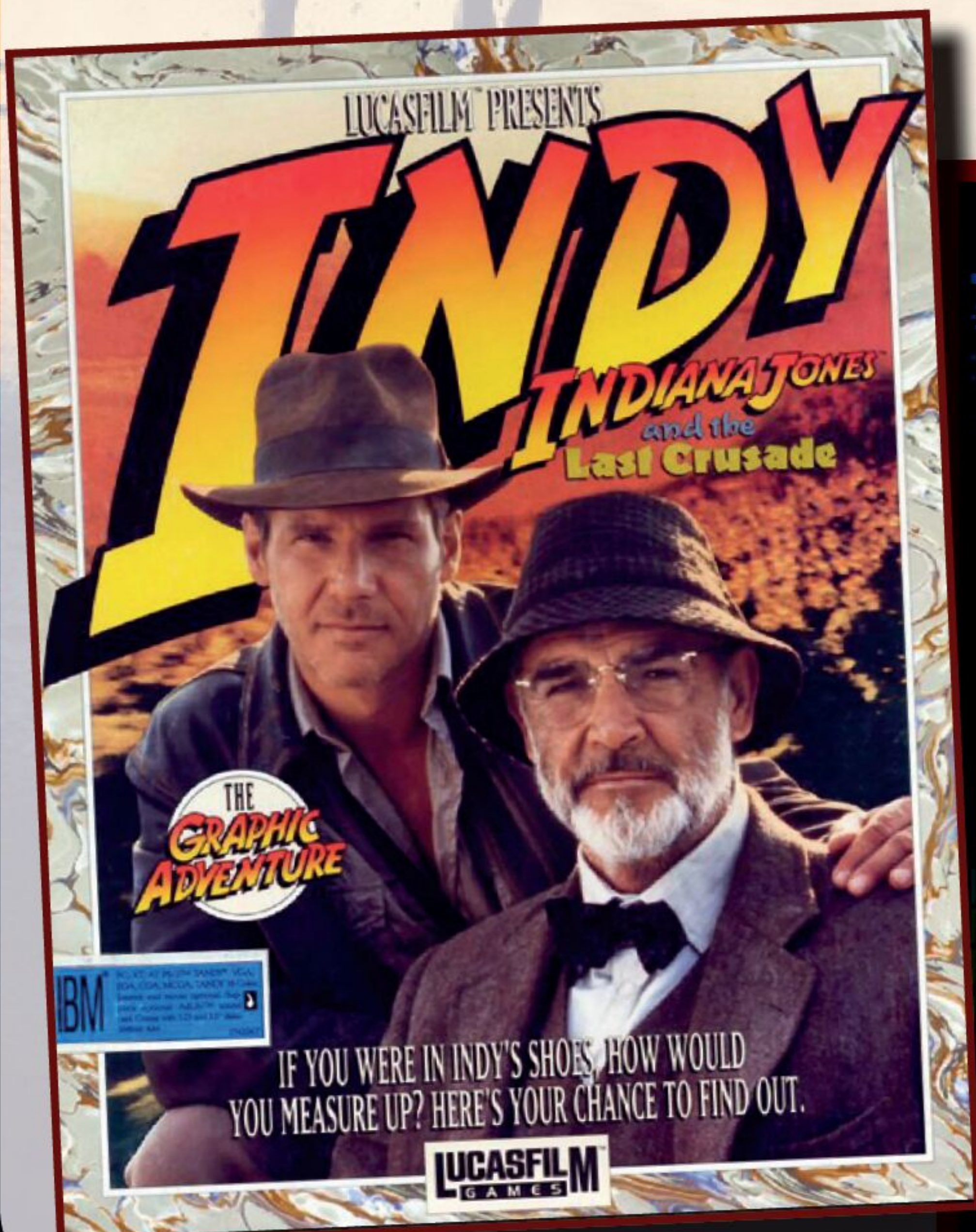
Ultimately there's only so much damage you can sustain, and you soon crash land. Then it's time to steal a car and drive the remainder of the way across the country, dealing with Nazi checkpoints along the way. Finally, if you're still alive after all the fighting, you'll reach the Valley of the Crescent Moon and the final resting place of the Grail. As in the movie, Indy must overcome three Grail trials to be deemed worthy and choose the Grail for himself.

This is where another excel-

lent feature of the game comes into play; your father's Grail Diary, a replica of which comes bundled with the game. As well as being full of background information about Henry Jones' life and Indy's childhood, the diary includes many clues needed to solve the game's puzzles, particularly during the final stages of the adventure.

The replay value is another great thing about *The Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure*. Try as you might, you won't get all the IQ points on your first playthrough. I've enjoyed revisiting the game several times and found something different each time. If you haven't played this Indy title, I recommend checking out the FM Towns CD-ROM release. Its 256 colour graphics and CD audio soundtrack deliver a fully immersive Indiana Jones adventure experience.

It's a masterpiece of point-and-click gaming by Lucasfilm Games and is only outdone by our final Indy title.





ALL RIGHT, JONES

And here we have it, the pièce de résistance of Indy games (in my opinion); *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*. More point-and-click adventuring was the order of the day with this 1992 follow-up to the *Last Crusade* by Lucas Arts. *Fate of Atlantis* built and expanded upon the previous graphic adventure with more puzzles to solve and characters to interact with. Three different 'paths' are available to follow the new original story, which adds replayability to the game.

The story revolves around the race to discover the underwater city of Atlantis, where it is believed a great power resides. Once again, the evil Nazis, led by Klaus Kerner, are the bad guys and want to harness Atlantis's power for warfare. Thankfully Indy's not alone this time, and along for the ride is his friend and old colleague Sophia Hapgood, who also happens to be an expert on



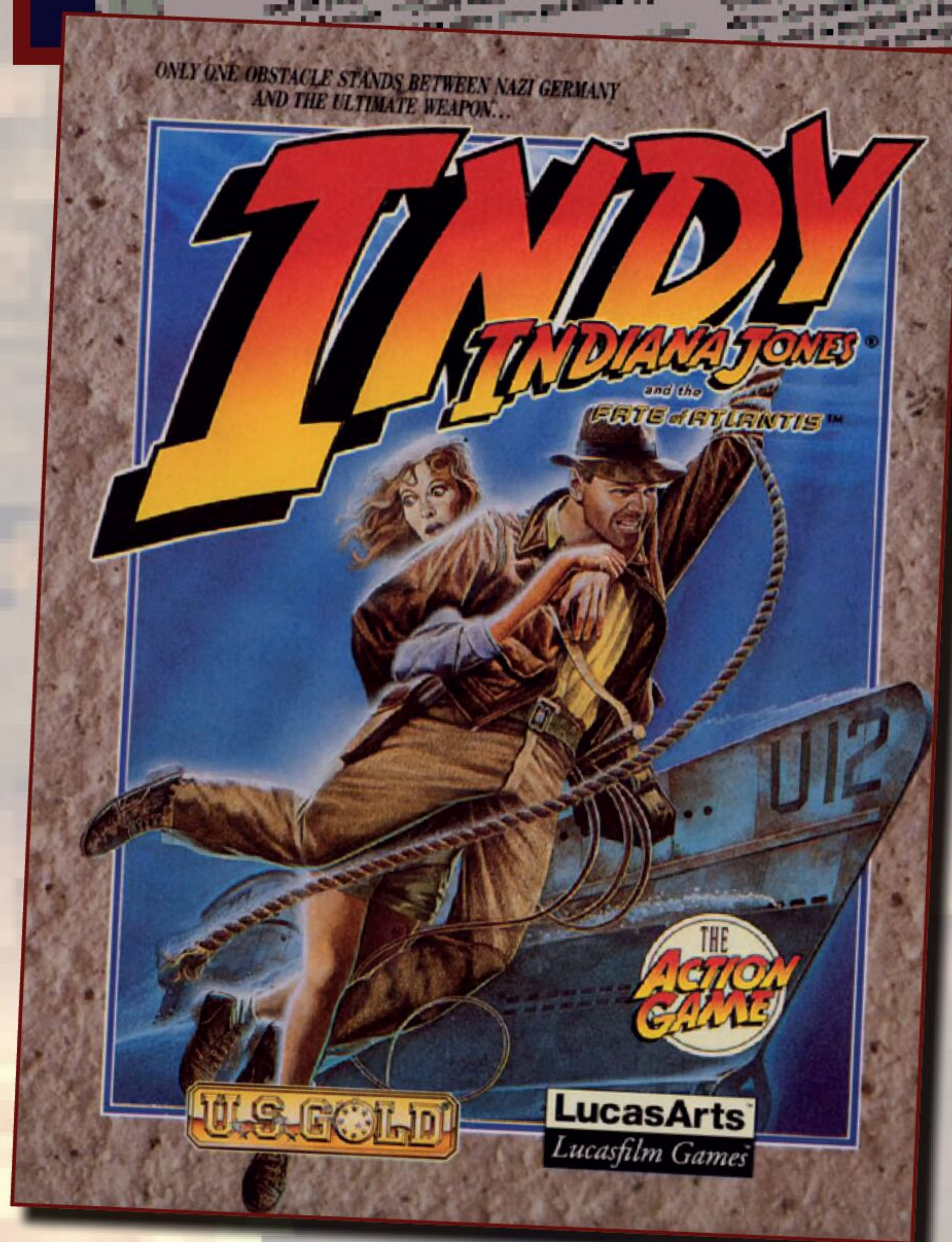
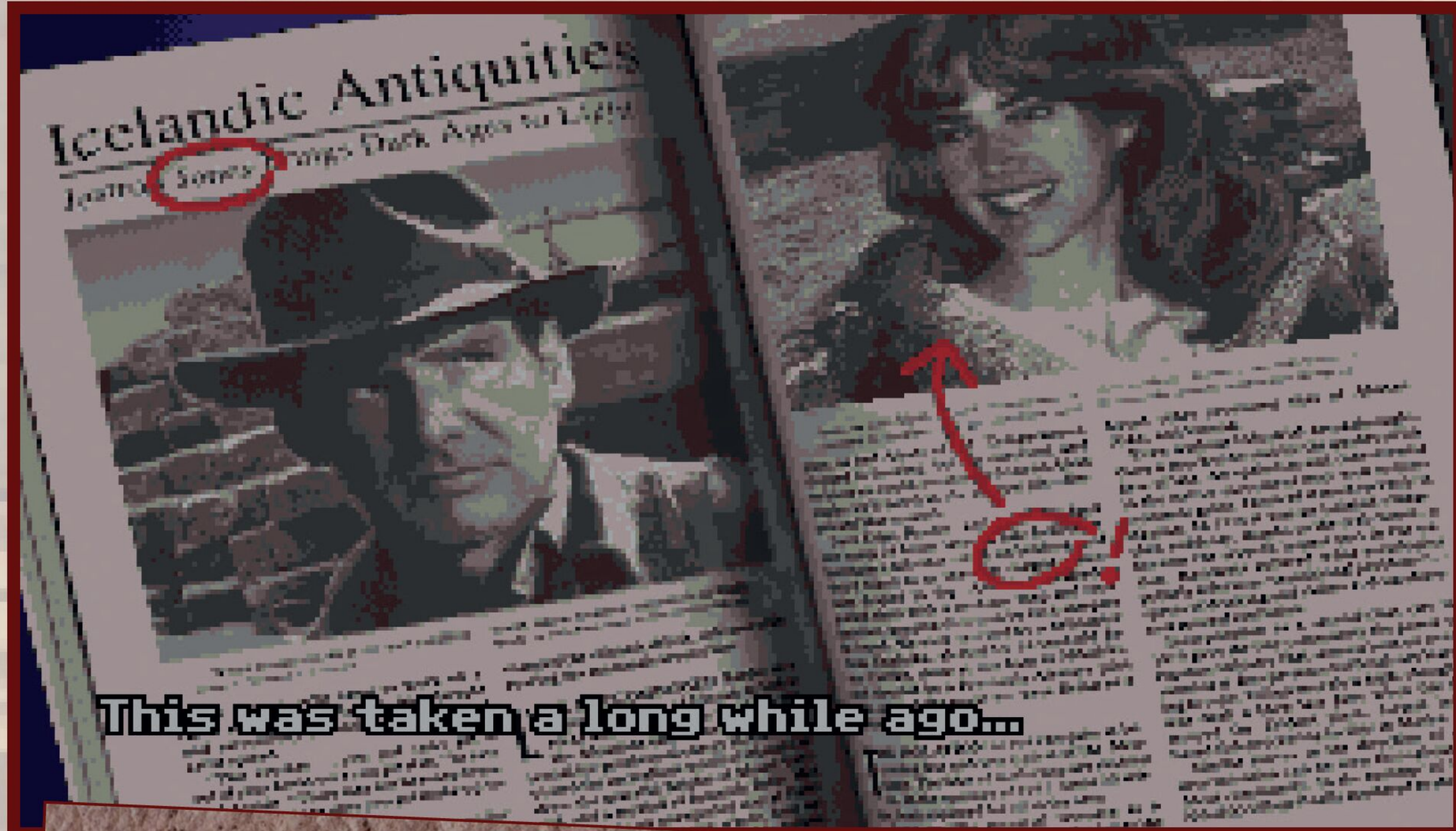
Atlantean culture and artefacts. The adventure takes our heroes from the USA to the Mediterranean, onto Iceland, the Azores and even North Africa before concluding in the subterranean ruins of Atlantis itself.

Midway through the game, the player can select one of the game's three paths. These are the Wits path, Team path or Fists path. The Wits path involves some additional problem and puzzle-solving, and the Team path sees you team up with Sophia. The Fists path, as you can imagine, means you'll be doing a lot more fighting. Regardless of which path you take, you'll ultimately end up at the same point in the story, entering Atlantis. There are also different endings to the game based on a decision made in the final sequence.

Graphically the game is gorgeous, with well-drawn and detailed backdrops, sprites and animations. Like *The Last Crusade*, a CD-ROM version was released, which featured speech with over 8000 lines of dialogue. Sadly Harrison Ford was unavailable to read the lines for Indy,



Above: The Azores, a possible Atlantean outpost.



so instead, this honour fell to voice actor Doug Lee. Lee would go on to be the voice of Indy in 1999's *Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine*, the first ever 3D style Indy adventure that was heavily influenced by the *Tomb Raider* series.

Fate of Atlantis was well received and earned the prestigious 'Adventure Game of the Year' title. It's often regarded as one of the greatest games ever and is an absolute must-play for any Indy fans.

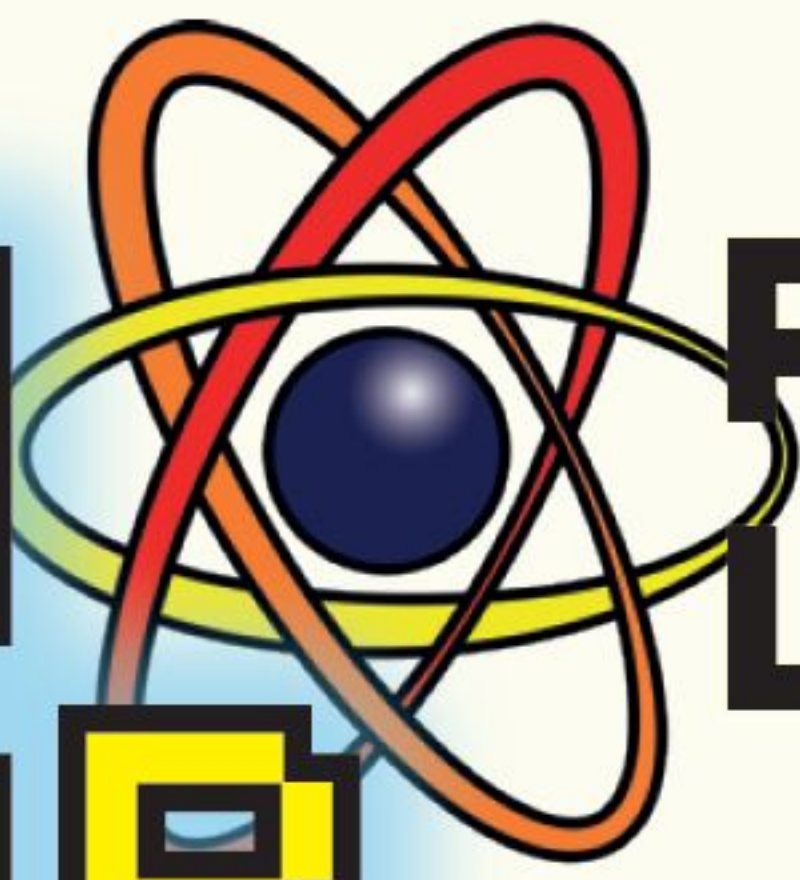


MORE INDY ACTION!

Lucas Arts also released *Fate of Atlantis: The Action Game*. The gameplay was presented in an isometric format, and while the storyline was more or less the same as the graphic adventure, the game focused more on combat than puzzles. You also got to switch characters and play as Sophia, who has certain skills required to progress and comes in handy should Indy get captured.

Fate of Atlantis: The Action Game is often overlooked in favour of the graphic adventure. However, it's quite good, especially once you get past the slow-paced first level set in a Monte Carlo casino. From there, the action and storyline heat up nicely with a good balance of puzzles and whip-cracking action. ■

FUSION REACTOR



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THE FUSION TEAM

HOW DOES A POWERWASH FUNCTION UNDERWATER? IF YOU WANT THE ANSWER, YOU'VE COME TO THE WRONG PLACE.



Retro Faith:

It has been a month of ups and downs for me. I was super happy to get *Sonic Origins Plus* to add to my Sonic collection but disappointed with the emulation of the Game Gear titles. Not that you can't enjoy them, but there is just something not quite right with them. My main focus this month has been tinkering with my new graphics card. It has opened my eyes once again to the glorious world of modern PC gaming. I've been enjoying catching up with a few AAA titles from the last couple of years, and the visuals are blowing my mind. Who knew that an old arcade dweller could find their way back to the sharp edge of gaming after all these years?



Andrew Oyston:

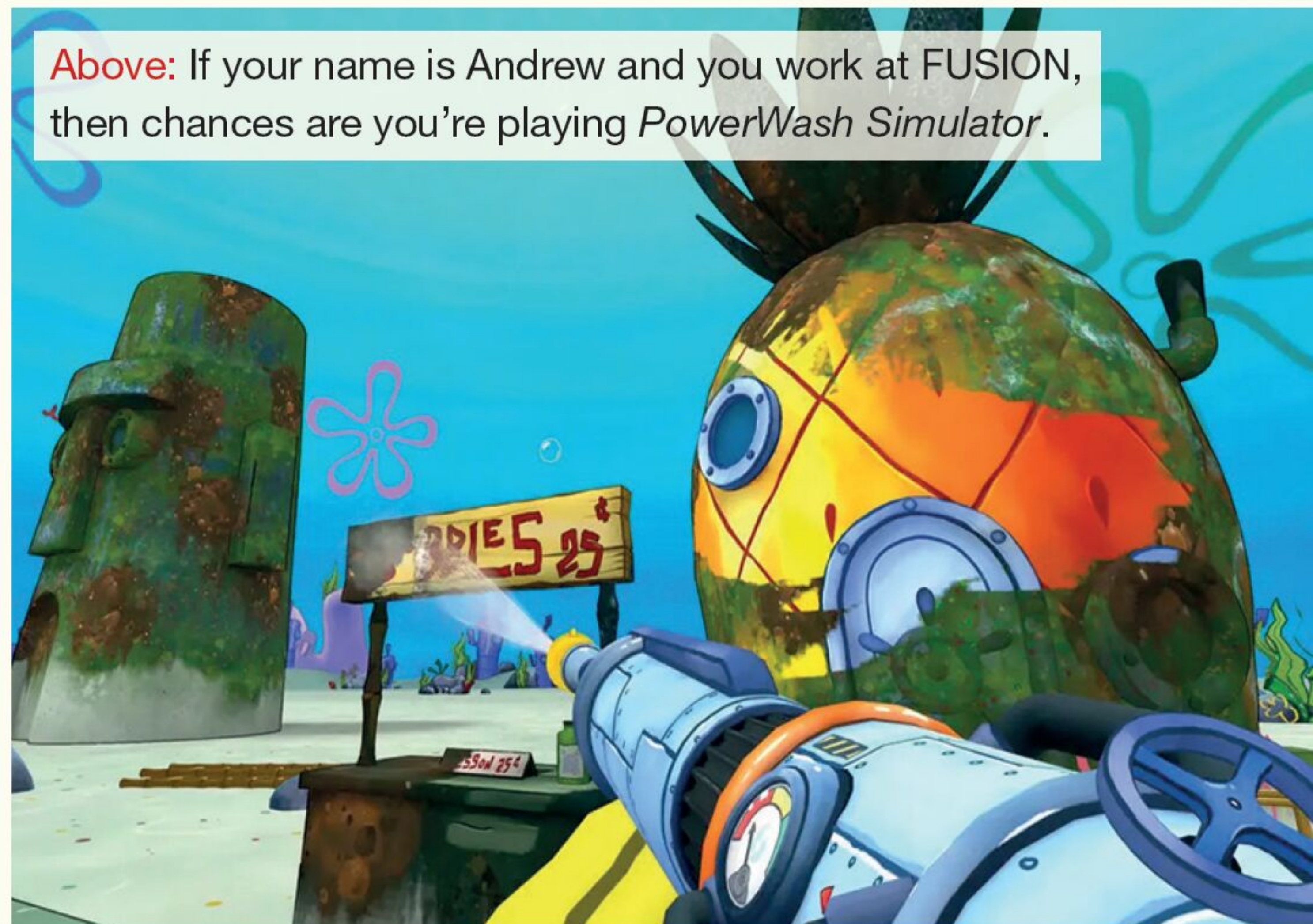
Once again, *PowerWash Simulator* has drawn me back in with the recently released Spongebob DLC. With more content drops later in the year, including Warhammer 40k (that Space Marine armour gets very dirty, I understand), this has to be the sleeper hit of the last twelve months. I've also been playing around with Amiga Forever; the emulation pack from Cloanto. It's been great fun playing some classic Amiga titles that aren't the usual suspects, but is it me (donning RISC OS branded flameproof coat), or is Workbench a really ugly desktop? So many colours to pick from, and they went with blue and orange...



Paul Twist:

Nintendo's announcement of *Super Mario Bros. Wonder* came just too late to heat up last issue's Reactor, so it's

Above: If your name is Andrew and you work at FUSION, then chances are you're playing *PowerWash Simulator*.



Above: Paul likes *Super Mario Wonder* so much that he has achieved full FUSION REACTION this month!

sent it sky-high this issue. I've been a fan of Mario's 2D side-scrolling platform japey ever since I encountered *Super Mario Bros.* on a NES display unit in Makro in the mid-1980s. I couldn't believe a game so slick and colourful was possible on a home machine. My first look at *Super Mario Bros. Wonder* has inspired a similar sense of, well, wonder almost forty years later. Elephant Mario is obviously the stand-out from the preview footage, and I look forward to getting to grips with this trunk (oo-er!) I'm also pleased we're not just getting another title in the *New Super Mario Bros.* series but something that looks like a proper new 2D Mario title.



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**Andrew Fisher:**

I have cleaned up Bikini Bottom, thanks to the excellent SpongeBob

SquarePants (paid) DLC for *Powerwash Simulator*. And I spent a bit more time with *Vampire Survivors*, although I dare not play too much because it can seriously affect my productivity. There's excellent progress on a book project with Fusion Retro Books that will be revealed shortly, and I finally have my operation date. So, fingers crossed, that means a couple of weeks of relaxing and recovering when I fully intend to enjoy my Evercade EXP and recent cartridges some more.

**Alan Hammerton:**

With ZZAP! Live just around the corner (it's mid-July as I write this);

gaming has been put to one side. In its place is the arduous task of testing a big pile of retro hardware that I will be taking along to the event for people to play on. Now, as much as I love the hardware, testing it is just an utter pain in the posterior. I spent two evenings pulling my Amiga 2000 apart to find out why it didn't work, only to find it just needed one chip reseating. It's not fun in any way; roll on the event so I can play some games again.

**George Sturgeon:**

This month I've finally completed my first *Assassin's Creed* title. As someone

who often has multiple games in progress at a time, I've at long last finished *Assassin's Creed: Origins* (129 quests and around 140 hours later). I've spent the remainder of this month rearranging furniture and shelving units to try and fit my newly acquired PlayStation 5 in position (why on earth is this console so big?!). Once set up, I immediately set out to explore the castle in *Hogwarts Legacy*. It's an absolutely stunning marvel of architecture, yet one that takes me

Below: ZZAP Live! is imminent and Alan is working his socks off getting the vintage Commodores working for the event.



back to my first day at muggle school, as I get hopelessly lost without a compass! It's early days, but I've been impressed by what I've seen so far!

**Toy Polloi:**

Even after ten years of running Toy Polloi and over 30 years of being

a vintage toy collector, I'm still learning new ways to fix and repair toys. I got to grips with a vintage Space 1999 Moon Base Alpha playset this month. This toy was not released in the UK (as far as I know), so finding parts for it is not an option. I had to use all my creativity to get it back up and running. Fun.

**Ben Honebone:**

The past month has been very productive. I've been working on multiple projects,

including this year's FUSION Annual, which is shaping up nicely thanks to the efforts of a cracking team. I've been working on magazine layouts so much over the past month that I haven't found the time to write as much as I'd like. So thanks again to the team for picking up the slack (and tolerating me continuously moving their articles around!). Aside from all that, I've been smashing the online matches in *Street Fighter VI*, seemingly oblivious and immune to any other video games for the time being. "The answer lies in the heart of the internet." ■



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